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SCS #1031

THE 3.7.2.

CHRISTIAN LIFE

DELINEATED,

In the principal LINES thereof, both as to its RISE and PROGRESS.

In several practical Discourses:

I. On Sinners finding CHRIST, finding LIFE.
II. On the BELIEVER'S LIFE, as a going up from the Wilderness of this World, to the heavenly Canaan, leaning upon CHRIST.
III. On WALKING WITH GOD, in its MATTER and PROPERTIES.
IV. On PRAYER; the Nature thereof in general; the SPIRIT'S HELP therein; the Performance thereof in the NAME of CHRIST; and GOD'S HEARING of it.
V. On ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD, of Mens Works, as well as their Persons, freely in CHRIST.

By the late Reverend and Learned

MR THOMAS BOSTON,

Author of the Fourfold State, &c. &c.

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PREFACE.

THOUGH the character and reputation of the venerable and great man whose name these sermons bear, both as a scholar and a divine, is so well established, as to need no recommendation to such as are acquainted with his other valuable performances, especially from so mean and obscure a hand as mine; yet being desired by his grandson the Rev. Mr Michael Boston of Falkirk, to write something by way of preface to them, the regard I have, and shall always have for his name and memory, makes me the more readily comply with his request.

The acquaintance I had with him, and the frequent opportunities I had of hearing him preach, I look upon as one of the greatest privileges I was favoured with in my early days, and which I still reflect on with great pleasure. He was indeed one of the most powerful preachers of the gospel I ever heard open a mouth. It is true he was no Boanerges as to his voice, his delivery being grave and deliberate, yet there was a majestic energy in it, which together with his venerable and comely aspect, made no small impression to his advantage on the minds of them who had the pleasure of hearing him.

There were few men (if any) in his day who courted popularity less than he did, nay he rather shunned it; but like his shadow it followed him where-ever he went: for his ministrations were savoury and acceptable to all who had a relish for the truth as it is in Jesus, and a love to that holiness of heart and life, which the belief of it never fails to influence in the minds of all the children of God.

They who have perused what he published, or prepared for the press in his own lifetime, will see a very great difference between that, and what has been published since his death from his notes prepared only

for the pulpit. Yet even with all the disadvantages that attend posthumous publications, true judges will see a rich vein of thought running through the whole, that in point of propriety and justness will bear the strictest scrutiny. In the original form in which the following discourses now appear, they were highly proper for a popular audience, who constantly attended on his ministry; but he could easily have cast the matter of them into such a form, as would have made them more fit for public use, had his finishing hand been put to them. But that is what cannot be done now; and therefore they are here presented to the reader in the simple unadorned dress in which they were weekly written by the author, for the help of his own memory in delivering them to a plain country congregation. O how highly were they favoured who sat under such a lively searching ministry! Much had they to account for, if they did not improve it in a suitable manner; and I may say, more had they to account for, who wilfully neglected and poured contempt on such a ministry.

Though he usually wrote his sermons as full as he intended to preach them, yet this was not always the case: for some of his sermons printed a good many years ago from his notes, which I myself heard him preach, and took him a full hour to deliver, yet may be read, even deliberately, in near the half of that time. One reason of which is this, the scriptures which he brought as proofs of the points he was handling, are only cited chapter and verse in his notes, and he left several enlargements on them to delivery: for he had a talent peculiar to himself in pointing out the propriety of such proofs; and his more than ordinary critical knowledge of the original languages in which the scriptures were written, enabled him in a brief but comprehensive way, to glance at the meaning of the Spirit of God in them, that was both surprising and edifying to the hearers. Could this

this have been recovered, it would have added greatly to the beauty of these discourses; but neither this, nor the lively spirited manner in which they were delivered, can be put in print, and set before the reader. But where the scripture-proofs are not inserted at full length, and only chapter and verse cited, if the reader will be at the pains to turn to his Bible, as he goes along in reading, he will find himself amply repaid for his pains, by the satisfaction it will give him; and it will convince him of the justness of what I have now suggested. At the same time it must be observed, that the discourses now offered to the public, are as free of the imperfections incident to posthumous pieces, as any of the author's that have been printed.

To serious Christians of every denomination, whose minds are exercised to godliness, these discourses cannot but be highly acceptable, as they have a direct tendency to lead the mind to the study of practical and experimental religion; a point greatly needed, and alas! too much neglected by the present generation, even of them who profess the name of Christ. All of them are on subjects of the utmost importance, as they in a particular manner relate to what our Lord calls *the one thing needful*, the spiritual, the divine life in the soul: the way how it is begun, maintained, carried on, and perfected in the hearts of all the children of God; making them completely meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. These are subjects that touch the vitals of practical godliness, and therefore deserve the most serious perusal. With which may be very fitly classed, those discourses of the author, lately published, that are entitled, *The Distinguishing Characters of true Believers, relating to Christian Morality*; wherein the duties, temper, and attainments of the Christian, are delineated with very great precision and perspicuity. From which it will appear, that holiness of life made

a capital part of the author's religious ſyſtem, and that the charge brought againſt it by ſome, that it leads to licentiouſneſs, is ridiculous and abſurd.

How ſweetly is the duty of prayer handled in theſe diſcourſes? That neceſſary duty, which may fitly be called the converſe of the ſoul with the Hearer of prayer; the breath of God breathed into it by the Spirit of grace and ſupplication, carrying it in the exerciſe of every grace proper to the duty, back to its divine Original. O bleſſed are they, who like Moſes are admitted to intimate converſe with God, and allowed to continue in it, till their faces ſhine by being made partakers of his holineſs, and then (as one well expreſſes it) "come forth to converſe with others as he did, with both the tables of the law in their hands," ſhowing by their ſpirit and way, that that eternal rule of righteouſneſs is written on the fleſhly tables of their hearts by the finger of the living God.

It is pleaſant and delightful to obſerve, how the duty of prayer is dilated and enlarged on in theſe ſermons, by being placed in different points of view, all of them proper to the ſubject, without any thing of diſguſting tautology or repetition; which ſhows what a rich invention the author had: and I believe he has therein given us a deſcription of his own heart and experience; for he was a man given to prayer. Here I believe we have preſented to us many things he himſelf learned on his knees, when pouring out his heart to God in that duty. Alas, that ſpirit of prayer, that was poured out ſo plentifully on many miniſters and Chriſtians of the laſt age, and partly in the beginning of the preſent too, is in a great meaſure reſtrained and withdrawn. The many hours they ſpent in that duty daily, and on ſome more ſolemn occaſions, are rather ſpoken of and wondered at, than imitated: and this may be aſſigned as one reaſon why we fall ſo far ſhort of them in point of Chriſtian experience and holy walking with God.

May

May the ſweet matter contained in theſe evangelical diſcourſes be inſtrumental in ſtirring up all who ſhall peruſe them, to a more conſtant and fervent practice of this duty. It would be a token for good, that the Lord would yet return to us, and leave a bleſſing behind him, by ſhining upon his ſanctuary, and watering his inheritance when it is weary.

The contents of the ſecond volume, which I am authorized to ſay are the laſt of the author's ſermons intended for publication, in a particular manner deſerve ſerious conſideration, in regard they are for moſt part on that important and deeply intereſting ſubject, THE OTHER WORLD, and the ſolemn entrance the ſoul makes into it at the hour of death. And herein I believe the author has ſet before us the exerciſe of his own mind, in viewing the near approach of that hour: for they were among the laſt ſermons he preached, and much about the time of the ſolemn preparation he made for death mentioned in his Diary. Which ſhows that he took a particular pleaſure in dwelling upon the ſubject, that he might lead his hearers to the ſame ſerious and cloſe thoughts he himſelf had of it.

It is more than probable, that beſides the gradual decay of nature he felt the laſt two or three years of his life, that he had ſome ſecret notice impreſſed on his mind of his approaching diſſolution, which made death and the other world a ſubject ſuitable and pleaſant to himſelf, while at the ſame time it is never unſeaſonable to any audience whatever.

All natural motions are accelerated and quickeſt, the nearer they come to their centre; and renewed ſouls, born from above, who are breathing after the perfection of holineſs, and groaning under the burden of a body of ſin and death, no wonder than they have a peculiar pleaſure in looking forward, and haſting to the happy hour that ſhall complete their ſalvation, ſaying with the church, Song ii. 17. *Until the day break, and the ſhadows flee away: turn, my Beloved,*

loved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of ſeparation.

This would not be ſo rare an attainment, if there was more of cloſe and accurate walking with God; of which we have a beautiful and particular deſcription in the ſermons on that ſubject in the firſt volume. In which alſo I believe we have a delineation of his own walk and practice: for he was not only an able miniſter of the New Teſtament, but a holy, tender, accurate Chriſtian, exemplifying what he preached to others; which ſhewed that his mind was indeed caſt into the mould of the goſpel.

As to the genuineneſs of theſe diſcourſes, they are all printed from the author's own manuſcript. And I am adviſed, that very great care has been taken in comparing them with it, ſo as to render them as acceptable in that reſpect as poſſible.

May the Lord the Spirit, who miniſtered this precious ſeed to him the firſt ſower of it in preaching, make it now bread to the eater, who ſhall peruſe it in reading and holy meditation; that it may comfort and ſtrengthen the hearts of the children of God who are travelling to the Zion which is above, where *the Lamb which is in the midſt of the throne, ſhall feed them, and ſhall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* This is, and ſhall be the earneſt prayer of one who counts it his real honour and glory (though unworthy of it) to be their ſervant for Jeſus ſake.

Braintree in Eſſex,
January 24. 1775.

THOMAS DAVIDSON.

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The substance of several sermons preached at Etterick, in the year 1721.

PROVERBS viii. 35.

For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.

THIS chapter represents to us Wisdom speaking openly and most earnestly to her hearers. The discourse begins ver. 4. and goes on to the end of the chapter.

It may here be inquired, 1. Who or what is this Wisdom that speaks? I answer, Jesus Christ, the personal Wisdom of God, Luke xi. 49. 1 Cor. i. 24. in both which passages Christ is expressly called *the Wisdom of God.* This appears from the personal properties ascribed to this Wisdom, as, (1.) Subsistence, ver. 30. *Then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight.* Compare John i. 1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (2.) The manner of subsistence, namely, eternal generation, ver. 22. 23. 24. *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth: when there were no fountains abounding with water.* (3.) Personal attributes and effects, ver. 14. 15. 16. 17. &c *Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding, I have strength,* &c.

It may be inquired, 2. To whom he speaks? I

 answer,

anſwer, *To men*, ver. 4. *Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the ſons of men:* ſinful and ruined men, who ſtand in need of ſalvation.

3. It may be inquired, What he ſpeaks? I anſwer, The ſum of it all is to commend himſelf to their ſouls, for their eternal happineſs, ver. 11. and downwards, *For wiſdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be deſired, are not to be compared to it*, &c.

4. What is the application of his diſcourſe? It is an exhortation to hear his voice, comply with it, and cloſe with him, ver. 32. and downwards, *Now therefore hearken unto me*, &c.

In the two laſt verſes is the concluſion of the whole matter.

(1.) Happineſs is wrapt up in the enjoyment of him, ver. 35. *For whoſo findeth me, findeth life, and ſhall obtain favour of the Lord.*

(2.) Ruin is inevitable in the rejecting of him, ver. 36 *But he that ſinneth againſt me, wrongeth his own ſoul; all they that hate me, love death.*

The former is the ſubject of our text; in which conſider,

1. The connection with the preceding words, *For;* ſhewing them to be the reaſon of the bleſſedneſs pronounced on thoſe that *hear him, watching daily at his gates*, &c. Theſe gates are the ordinances. It is ſuppoſed that he comes out at theſe gates, and ſo men being found watching at them, find him when he is pleaſed to come forth. It is a metaphor, which may be taken either, (1.) From ſcholars, whoſe hearts being ſet on learning, wait on at the ſchool-door, till they can get in; or, (2.) From courtiers, Eſth. ii. 21. or others waiting for acceſs to their prince. (3.) Or from clients waiting on their advocates, or their judges, late and early. Or, (4.) From lovers, who will hang on, watching for a meeting, Job xxxi. 9. They that thus watch and wait at Chriſt's gates, till he come forth, for getting their errand, are made up for ever. Which is the import of,

2. The

2. The words themſelves; deſcribing the happineſs of thoſe that find Chriſt. Wherein there are two things.

1ſt, The happy man in Heaven's account, *Whoſo findeth me.* It imports, that it is not every one that comes to his gates, that finds him; many go as they came: but ſome do find him. The world counts him the happy man, that finds riches, honours, pleaſures, *&c.* like Ephraim, who ſaid, *I am become rich, I have found me out ſubſtance*, Hoſ. xii. 8.; and therefore they watch and wait greedily where they may have them, ſaying, *Who will ſhew us any good?* Pſal. iv. 6. But when they have found what they were ſeeking, it often appears, that they have been ſeeking and have found their own ruin. But he is happy indeed that finds Chriſt, for he finds an upmaking treaſure.

2dly, The happineſs of that man; which lies in two things.

(1.) He that finds Chriſt, *finds life.* Without him we are dead men; but falling on Chriſt the fountain of life, as the man's dead body on the bones of Eliſha, 2 Kings xiii. 21. the ſoul gets life, eternal life, that will never die out any more. Heb. *Hath found*; in finding me, he hath found life, 1 John v. 12. *He that hath the Son, hath life.*

(2.) He *ſhall obtain favour of the Lord*; for the Father is well pleaſed with Chriſt, and with all who are in him. He ſhall be accepted with the Lord, Eph. i. 6. The ſky ſhall clear on him, which was louring before. Heaven ſhall ſmile on him. Yea, he ſhall bring forth favour from the Lord, as out of a treaſure now opened to him; ſo the word intimates.

From the connection of the text with the preceding context, we may obſerve the two following doctrines, *viz.*

Doct. I. *The ordinances are the place where Chriſt is to be found of poor ſinners.*

DOCT. II. *People may come to ordinances, and yet not find Christ.*

I shall discuss these two doctrines before I enter on the words themselves.

DOCT. I. *The ordinances are the place where Christ is to be found of poor sinners.*

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what are the ordinances in which Christ is to be found.

II. Confirm the doctrine.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I am to shew what are the ordinances wherein, especially, Christ is to be found. If any of you have Job's desire, Job xxiii. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him!* I would direct you to *go out by the footsteps of the flock*, Cant. i. 8. where to find him. These ordinances are,

1. The divine ordinance of meditation, Hag. i. 5. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.* Here is the first sight oft-times that a sinner gets of Christ; as did the prodigal son, Luke xv. 17. *When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!* Therefore David adviseth his enemies to this, Psal. iv. 4. *Commune with your own heart upon your bed.* And here the saints have often got renewed sights of him, to their souls satisfaction, Psal. lxiii. 5. 6. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.* What is it that keeps Christ and many sinners asunder, but that really they will not come near this gate of wisdom? They will not think on their case.

2. Christian conference about spiritual matters. Hence

Hence we read of this being practised in a very declining time, Mal. iii. 16. *Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another.* This was the gate at which the two disciples found and met with Christ, Luke xxiv. 32. *Did not our heart burn within us*, say they, *while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?* As two cold flint-stones struck one upon another produce fire; so doth spiritual conference sometimes warm cold hearts, Cant. v. 8. 9. and vi. 1. Meetings for Christian fellowship have been meeting-places with Christ to many; the due consideration whereof, might well encourage and stir up Christians to a more frequent attendance upon them.

3. Singing of the Lord's praises. This is a commanded duty, Eph. v. 18. 19.—*Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.* What made David so frequently to wait on about this gate, but that he knew the King used to come forth that way? Here Paul and Silas got a joyful meeting with Christ even in a prison, Acts xvi. 25. 26. It is pity, that people should treat it as a blind gate, at which they never look for the Lord to come forth. But in the experience of the Lord's people he is to be found there. The heavenly melody sometimes melts hard hearts, elevates drooping souls, and fills them with glowing affection to Christ.

4. Prayer. It is called seeking of God, and is the high way to find him. It has a large promise, Matth. vii. 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you*; and it has been the gate of heaven to many a soul. It is a four-leaved gate, and at every one of the leaves the King has shewn himself to poor sinners. (1.) Public prayer, at which Lydia got her heart opened, Acts xvi. 13. 14. (2.) Private prayer, whether in one's family, Acts x. 30. or otherwise in society with

others privately, Acts xii. 12. This social prayer has a large promise made to it, Matth. xviii. 19 *I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* (3.) Secret prayer. Many a soul has found Christ there. There Jacob got the blessing, Gen. xxxii. 24. There Daniel beheld the King in his glory, and obtained favour, Dan. ix. 22. This has many a time made the corner of a barn, bire, or a dike-side, a Bethel, a Peniel; and these are more esteemed than a king's palace, by the children of God. (4.) Ejaculatory prayer. This has many times suddenly opened, to the soul's finding of Christ. So it did with Moses, Exod. xiv. 15. *Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:* and with Nehemiah, chap ii. 4. No wonder they do not find him, that watch not at this gate.

5. The word. This is the most patent door of heaven, at which the King usually comes forth to his attendants, that come to wait on him there. It is a two-leaved gate. (1) The word read, Rev. i. 3. *Blessed is he that readeth* Augustine hearing a voice, Take up and read, opened Rom. xiii. 12. 13. and was converted: Junius was brought to Christ by reading John i. (2) The word preached, 1 Cor. i. 21.—*It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* This is a well of salvation at which three thousand persons at a time drank and lived, Acts ii. 41. The eunuch met with Christ at this gate, where the one, *viz.* hearing the word, opened after the other, *viz.* reading the word; and he found favour with the Lord.

6. *Lastly*, The sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper. These are sealing ordinances, in which many have had sensible communion with Jesus Christ. It is true, the first finding of him is not to be expected here: but though they are not converting, they are confirming ordinances; and as such, happy means of strengthening

strengthening the believer's faith and love, and increasing his acquaintance with Christ.

II. In order to confirm this doctrine, consider,

1. The ordinances are by Christ's own appointment the trysting-places, wherein he has promised to be found of those that seek him, Exod. xx. 24. *In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.* So that coming thither to wait on him, they may expect to find him there. It is the divine appointment put upon them, which is accompanied with a blessing, that gives ground of hope in the case. By this they are,

(1.) Trysting-places for sinners; where they may be convinced, converted, and regenerated, Jam. i. 18. *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.* These are the pools, where the Spirit troubles the water for the cure of sinners of their deadly soul-diseases. And there Christ and the sinner meet for making up the spiritual match.

(2.) Trysting-places for saints; where they may receive life more abundantly, 1 Pet. ii. 2. 3. In them he keeps his lower table for the feeding of those to whom he has given life. They are the inns in the way to Immanuel's land; the pools in the way to Zion, the wells of salvation.

2. They are the places wherein his people seek him, who know best where he is to be found. When the spouse had lost sight of her beloved, she goes to the ordinances to seek him, Cant. iii. 2. *I will rise now*, says she, *and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth.* And they are the places where his people have found him, and do find him, Cant. vii. 5.—*The King is held in the galleries.* So it is even as natural to them to go to these duties and ordinances when they would see him, as for a child to seek out the mother, in the place where she is wont to be. And when they find him

him not in one duty, they go to another, till going the little further they find him.

3. They are what the Lord has allowed his people to supply the want of heaven, until they come there: the tabernacle set up in the wilderness, till they get the temple in Canaan. And therefore they must last till then, and no longer, Eph. iv. 11. 12. 13. *And he gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* When John saw the new Jerusalem, he made that observe on it, Rev. xxi. 22. *I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it.* But they could not supply that place, unless Christ were there: but he is there, Matth. xxviii. *ult. Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.* Cant. iv. 6. *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.*

III. *Lastly*, I come now to apply this doctrine.

Use I. Of reproof. It reproves,

1. Those who slight attendance on ordinances, public, private, or secret. It is much to be lamented, that there are so many who do so, and that so little prevails with many to do it. Ah! Sirs, if ye look on this practice in its true colours, it is a slighting of Christ, and an opportunity of meeting with him. It is a breaking of the appointment which the Son of God has made with you; and if the appointment be broken, must not the business you have with him stick?

2. Those who will come to ordinances to meet with some that they have worldly business with. They will come to the church on the Lord's day, because they

they have somebody to meet with there, perhaps a servant to bespeak, *&c.* This is a grosly profane abuse of the ordinances of the Lord; a turning of that which Christ appointed for the service of your souls, to the service of your lusts; a turning of that which is appointed for your eternal interest, into your carnal interests. What will these say, when Christ rises up to plead with them at the great day? when they shall hear, that his being to be found there, could not bring them there; but they would go for fellow-worms, to transact business with them?

3. Those who come to ordinances, but seek not to find Christ there; of such the Lord speaks, Is. xxix. 13.—*This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.* How many go to prayers, sermons, *&c.* who have it not in their view to meet with Christ in them? So they come away without him, and they do not mourn because they find him not: and how can they be so affected, since it was not their errand to meet with him?

4. Those who stand in the way of others attending on ordinances. The effect of this is to keep them out of Christ's way, and to hinder their keeping appointment with the Son of God: by which they become answerable forall the damage that thereupon ensues to the souls of such, Luke xi. 52. *Wo unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered.*

Use II. Seek Christ in ordinances, and come to them with a design to find Christ there. When ye go to read the word, to secret duties, or family-duties, or public ordinances, think with yourselves, "I am going to Wisdom's gates, O shall I not see "the King's face? find the smell of his garments, "get some communion with Christ?" When Mary missed him in his grave, she could not be satisfied with a vision of angels, but wept on, till she found him,

him, John xx. 11.—16. O that there were such a heart in us! For motives to enforce this exhortation, consider,

1. He is well worth the seeking. *He that findeth Christ, findeth life.* If his transcendent beauty, and peerless excellencies were known, we could not but seek him, till we had found him, John iv. 10. *If thou knewest the gift of God,* says Christ to the woman of Samaria, *and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.* They that find him are made up for time and eternity. When ye come to ordinances, know ye where ye are? Ye are upon a beautiful field, and it may be your own. Ye see the surface of it, but know ye what is in the bowels of it? A treasure, and Christ is that treasure, Matth. xiii. 44. The ordinances are the earthen vessels, but there is a treasure in them, 2 Cor. iv. 7.

2. That is what the people of God have been seeking and are intent upon in ordinances, in all ages, however careless the blind world has been about it. And they sought always again, because they had once found; they still desired to drink of that fountain, after they had once tasted of it. Hence says David, Psal. xxvii. 4. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.* Psal. lxiii. 2. *My flesh longeth for thee—to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* When Jacob found himself engaged with Christ, how intent was he? Gen. xxxii. 24. *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* This has made them follow ordinances to the fields and the mountains, at the hazard of their lives by persecutors: and they thought all hardships little enough, to find Christ in them.

3. What avail ordinances, if ye do not find Christ in them? Upon this consideration, we should take Moses's protestation before we go to them, Exod.

xxxiii.

xxxiii. 15. *If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.* They are but empty husks without him, and cannot feed the soul: he is the marrow and sap of them, John vi. 63. *The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* Mary met with a disappointment, when she saw two angels in the sepulchre, but Christ himself was away. Should the man that has a petition for life, be brought before the chair of state, but his prince not in it; would he not say, "Alas! it is the King alone himself that "can do my business:" So here, when the soul seeks Christ, ordinances alone will not satisfy it; no, the man wants to enjoy Christ in them, as he alone is suited to his case.

4. *Lastly*, It is a great pity ye should not meet, when the parties have come so far on the appointment. And,

(1.) Most of you come hither from a considerable distance: it is pity ye should forget your errand when ye are come. Ye come too far for nothing: the pains and toil of waiting on ordinances, I think, should even stir you up to think with yourselves, "What "am I at this pains for? what am I seeking? shall "I make nothing for my soul by it?"

(2.) But Christ came farther for it than any of you to keep this appointment, and it cost him infinitely dearer than it does any of you. It cost him a long journey from heaven to earth; to sweat drops of blood, and to lose his precious life on a cross; ere there could be a possibility of your meeting with him in ordinances. And now when he is come, shall the meeting misgive betwixt him and your souls? But I must proceed to consider,

Doct. II. *People may come to ordinances, and yet not find Christ.* One may be found at Christ's palace gates, and yet never see the King come forth; as Absalom did in another case.

Here

Here I shall give the reasons why it is so, and then apply the point.

I. I am to offer some reasons why sinners may come to ordinances, and not find Christ. And these are all on the sinner's side.

1. Some have no design of finding Christ in ordinances at all: they have no such thing as a meeting with Christ before their eyes. But the Sabbath-day is an idle day, and they will go to the church, and see and be seen, Is. i. 12. May be they like to hear the preaching, as they would like a lovely song to divert them. But for a Christ in the preaching, a Saviour for their lost souls, manifested therein; that is what never comes in their head. They are like Ezekiel's hearers, of whom the Lord says, chap. xxxiii. 31. 32. *They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.*

2. Many are very indifferent whether they find Christ in ordinances or not. And by their indifferency they even court a denial from the King. They are not at pains to tryst with him, in earnest, before they come to public ordinances. They do not prepare for the meeting, by casting down the idols of jealousy, 1 Pet. ii. 1. 2. Their spirits are very flat, and their desires languid when at ordinances; they are not *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.* They stand at the palace-gate, but they do not ask, seek, and knock, Matth. vii. 7. and go their way contented, though they do not find him.

3. Some desire not to see him at all, Job xxi. 14. *they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;* they are well content he shew

shew not himself to them. If his harbingers which go before him, namely, convictions of guilt and danger, once begin to appear, they quickly shut their eyes, and will be very desirous to get out of their way. They have no heart for the match with the Lord of glory, and so care not for coming to a treaty about it.

4. *Lastly*, Some who may have desires of meeting with Christ, yet cannot away with on-waiting at the gates, and going about from one gate to another, till they find him. We are naturally addicted to unbelieving haste, John vii. 6. If the Lord do not keep our time which we set, we conclude he will never come, Psal. cxvi. 11. But faith is a waiting grace, and sets no time, but persists in that exercise, Is. xxviii. 16. Lam. iii. 49. 50. Now the King, to try of what metal people's desires after him are, delays long his coming forth: and by the time that he comes, as it were, the throng is away from about the palace-gate, and there remains only here and there one, whom the grace of God has endued with a principle of on-waiting. And O how heavy is it to think, that some who have gone far to find Christ, have lost him for not going a little farther! Some have waited long, and have lost him for not waiting but a little longer. The Israelites waited for Moses till the thirty-ninth day; had they but waited the fortieth day, they would not have made and worshipped the golden calf, Exod. xxxii. 5. Saul waited for Samuel till the seventh day; had he waited a few hours longer, he had not offered sacrifices unwarrantably, and been stript of his kingdom, 1 Sam. xiii. 8. *&c.*

I shall now make some short improvement of this point.

Seek Christ so in ordinances, as ye may find him. That is,

1. Seek him *sincerely* and *uprightly* with all your heart, Deut. iv. 29. They are blessed that so seek

him, Psal. cxix. 2. Seeking from the teeth outward, may prevail with those who know not mens hearts; but not with him, who knows the language of the heart, without an interpreter. It is true, in a way of sovereignty, he may be found of those that seek him not, Is. lxv. 1. and love may make a net for a false heart: but who can promise on that?

2. Seek him *honestly* and *generously* for himself, Psal. cv. 4. Ye hear of his glorious matchless excellencies, let your hearts be caught in the net of his love. And let not his benefits be your only or main inducement, like those mentioned John vi 26. of whom our Lord says, *Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled;* for that casts contempt on his person. Sovereignty sometimes comes over this indeed, as in the case of Zaccheus.

3. Seek him *fervently*, Rom. xii. 11. How fervent was the Psalmist's heart, Psal. xlii. 1. *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.* Psal. lxiii. 1. 2. *O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* Drousy desires and lazy wishes will not find him out, Cant. iii. 1. 2. Be warm and importunate in your addresses, and the King will come forth at length, Luke xviii. 7.

4. Seek him *humbly*, Psal. x. 17. The woman of Canaan is a noble instance of a humble seeker, Matth. xv. 23. *&c.* Beggars must not be chusers. Humility teaches to be thankful for a crumb, for a passing view of the King.

5. Seek him *diligently*, Heb. xi. 6. Careless seekers can hardly look to be finders. Seek diligently, as the spouse on considering her case did, leaving no corner of the city untouched, that she might find him,

Cant.

Cant. iii. 2.; as those who are searching for hidden treasure, Prov. ii. 4. 5.

6. Seek him *mournfully*, Luke ii. 48. Mary did so, and found him, John xx. 11. *&c.* and Jacob also, Hos. xii. 4. When he withdraws, were one mourning for the want, it would be a hopeful sign. Lament after the Lord: there is good reason for it at this day.

7. *Lastly*, Seek him *constantly*, till ye find him, therein imitating the example of the church, Lam. iii. 49. 50. *Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission: till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.* Be resolute not to give over till ye have met with him, and be sure ye will not be disappointed in the end.

I come now to the words themselves. The happy man is he that findeth Christ. Finding of Christ is the upmaking of the soul, it is man's happiness; no wonder it be a big thing, comprehending much. I take it up in these two. (1.) A saving discovery of Christ made to the soul: so the word is used, Matth. xiii. 46. in the case of finding the pearl. (2.) An interest in him, yea, actual possession of him, as one's own obtained. So in our text, *findeth life, i. e.* really gets life. So they find him, who get such a discovery of him, as terminates in their closing with him, whereby he is theirs, and they are his.

The following doctrines offer themselves from the words now and formerly explained.

Doct. I. *Then do people find Christ, when, upon a saving discovery of Christ made to their souls, they close with him by faith.*

Doct. II. *Sinners finding Christ, find life.*

I shall handle each doctrine in order.

Doct. I. *Then do people find Christ, when, upon a*

saving discovery of Christ made to their souls, they close with him by faith. This I shall explain and apply.

In explaining the doctrine, I shall,

I. Offer some things in the general touching the finding of Christ.

II More particularly explain the soul's finding of Christ.

I. I am to offer some things in the general touching the finding of Christ. And,

1. There is a twofold finding of him; initial, and progressive.

1*st*, There is an *initial* finding of Christ, which is the soul's first finding of him, the first meeting betwixt Christ and the soul, Matth. xiii. 45. 46. when the dead soul meets with the life giving Saviour. Upon this our salvation depends.

2*dly*, There is a *progressive* finding of him, which is a child of God's finding of him in the progress of his state of grace, Matth vii. 7. Thus the spouse found him, Cant. iii. 4. after some partial withdrawing from her.

The difference betwixt these two lies in this, that the immediate effect of the former is union, of the other, actual communion with Christ. The one is the marriage with Christ, the other the return of the husband to his deserted spouse. The text, I think, comprehends both; but the first mainly; compare ver. *ult.* And both consist of a discovery of Christ, and a receiving him; the latter as well as the former; the one initial, the other progressive. It is the first of these I intend.

2. There are some things to be observed touching this finding of Christ.

1*st*, Sinners in their natural state have lost God, Eph. ii. 12. God is not their God, they have no saving interest in him. There was a covenant of friendship betwixt God and innocent man: but, alas! that covenant was broken, and man quite lost his

his friend, his God. So he goes up and down the world, in his natural state, a poor friendless creature.

2*dly*, Man is a seeking creature: for he cannot miss to know that he wants, nor to desire to have his wants supplied, Matth. xiii. 45. He goes through the creation, seeking something to satisfy his heart. And when one will not do, he goes to another. The soul of man, though in its blindness it knows not what it would be at, is still seeking; like a nest of young birds still gaping for meat from the dam.

3*dly*, There is no rest for, nor satisfying of the soul till it come to God. This is not from any desire the soul has of God while in its natural state; but ariseth from the natural make of it, whereby it comes to pass, that nothing less than an infinite good can satisfy it. Therefore the natural man is represented as one ever labouring, but never able to get rest, Matth. xi. 28. Isa. lv. 1. 2. And its life is a wandering and seeking without intermission, Matth. xiii. 45. 46.

4*thly*, God is in Christ, to be found in him, and in him only, 2 Cor. v. 19. Col. ii. 9. As the Israelites, who wandered forty years in the wilderness, had a tabernacle set up among them, where they might find God, which was called (Heb.) *the tabernacle of meeting*; so Jesus Christ is the true tabernacle of meeting betwixt God and sinners; and he is no where else to be found. So that till the soul fall on Christ in its weary search, it can never come to God, nor to true rest.

II. I shall more particularly explain the soul's finding of Christ. There are two things in it.

First, The soul savingly discovers and discerns Jesus Christ, by a new light let into it, John xvii. 3. There is a twofold discovery of Christ. (1.) An *objective* discovery of him in the gospel, given to all who hear it. Thus the sun's light discovers all things in the presence of the blind man, but alas! he cannot

perceive them for all that. (2.) A *subjective* discovery, when the eyes of the understanding are opened to see what is so discovered, Acts xxvi. 18. Is. xxxiii. 17. This is the finding of Christ, in respect of which the sinner is like Hagar near the well, Gen. xxi. 19. Jesus Christ is near the man, Rom. x. 8. but he sees him not, so still he wants him, till, the Lord opening his eyes, he discerns Christ, and so finds him. The soul then beholds him in a twofold glory.

1. The glory of his *person*, as God-man; an admirable person, a nonsuch, *the chief among ten thousand*, Cant. v. 10. The soul finding Christ, beholds him as the Father's fellow, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. in respect of his divine nature; and as our kinsman, and the glory of mankind, in respect of his human nature; the flower of Adam's posterity, *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.*

2. The glory of his *mediatory office*, 1 Tim. ii 5. The soul gets a sight of him, as the great Daysman betwixt God and sinners, fit to lay his hand upon both parties. It beholds him as the tabernacle of meeting, where God meets with the sinner to make up the peace; as that noble Personage appointed of the Father the repairer of the breach made by sin; the great Surety and Cautioner for sinners debt and God's glory. And there are six things the soul now sees in Christ.

(1.) A transcendent *excellency*, beauty, and loveliness in him, Is. xxxiii. 17. Cant. v. *ult.* It sees him lovely in his natures, in his offices, in his holy life, and in his bloody death; lovely in himself, and in his purchase. It is a too common question that the daughters of Jerusalem put to the spouse, Cant. v. 9. *What is thy beloved more than another beloved?* The world sees no beauty in him, for which he is to be desired; they see more beauty in carnal worldly objects, than in the Plant of Renown. But no sooner

er does the soul find him, but it sees him lovely above all persons and things. His discovered excellency darkens all created glory, as the sun arising darkens the candle-light, and makes the stars hide their heads, Matth. xiii. 45 46.

(2.) A *fulness* in him, for the supply of all its wants, Col. i. 19. *It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.* There is, (1.) A fulness of the *Godhead* in him, Col. ii 9. The soul that has lost God, finding him, finds God in him, John xiv. 11. (2) A fulness of *merit*, for our justification, and a title to heaven. (3.) A fulness of *Spirit*, for our sanctification, and making us meet for heaven. Finding Christ, the soul finds a treasure, for preciousness, abundance, and variety.

(3.) A *suitableness* in him; and that is twofold.

[1.] A suitableness in Christ to *their own case*, as when a hungry man finds meat, or a naked man cloaths, Rev. iii. 18. The soul of man goes through the creation, seeking a match in whom it may rest; but it never finds a suitable one till it find Christ. Still the bed is shorter than that it can stretch itself upon it, and the covering narrower than that it can wrap itself in it: but coming to Christ, the soul finds him completely suited to its case; suited to still and quiet the conscience by his atoning blood, and to satisfy its craving desires by his all-fulness. There appears then a suitableness in every thing in and about him; in his natures; in his offices; in his life and death, resurrection, ascension, *&c.*

[2.] A suitableness in him to *the glory of God.* The sinner whose eyes are opened, can never expect salvation but in a way suitable to God's perfections, his holiness and justice: and the mystery of Christ appears thus suited, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Here at once appears, how justice is satisfied, and the sinner saved; and God has his glory, and the sinner his salvation together.

(4.) The *wisdom* of God in him, 1 Cor. i. 24. The

The wisdom of God eminently appeared in the creation, and appears every day in the works of providence: but the master-piece of divine wisdom is the mystery of Christ, wherein is the greatest display of the divine perfections, his power, justice, holiness, mercy, love, goodness, and truth, all woven together by infinite wisdom. And there is none that finds Christ, but must say, that that device is one becoming infinite wisdom.

(5) An *ability* to save, Heb. vii. 25. When sin appears in its native colours to the awakened conscience, the soul is apt to question, if there be any balm in Gilead for such wounds; if there be any hope of such a case. But when Christ is discovered to the soul, he appears as the *Lord of hosts, mighty to save:* there is merit enough in his blood to wash away the deepest guilt; and efficacy enough in his Spirit to subdue the strongest corruptions.

(6) *Lastly, Willingness* to save, and to communicate of his fulness to the needy soul, Heb. iv. 15. 16. The discovery of this was what brought the prodigal son home, Luke xv. 17. and the utter want of it must make the starving soul die in despondency. This is that which of all things awakened sinners have most ado to discern in Christ, if he be willing to save them, to bestow his precious blood to wash such vile wretches as they. But it is discovered in lesser or greater measure to all that find Christ.

Secondly, Upon this discovery of Christ made unto and by the soul, the soul closes with Christ by faith. There is such a connection betwixt these two, that, (1.) None can close with Christ without it, Cant. v. 9. People may love an unseen Christ, but not an unknown Christ. (2.) All that get it close with him, Psal. ix. 10. John iv. 10. For,

1. Such a discovery of Christ is not made to the soul, till it be hunger-bitten, lost in its own eyes, and would be content with a Saviour on any terms, Acts ix. 6. Prov. xxvii. 7. A starving person needs no

no other invitation to eat but to see meat; and when Christ is discovered to the soul lost in its own eyes, it will embrace him.

2. The nature of the object speaks for itself, John iv. 10. Christ discovered to the soul is *precious*, 1 Pet. ii. 7. and he who once finds the pearl, will gripe at it to make it his own. He is suitable to its case, which likewise ensures the soul's closing with him, as the sick man with the physician, or the captive with the deliverer.

3. It is always attended with a heart-conquering power, Psal. cx. 3. When the Lord opens the eyes in saving illumination, he looses the heart by renewing the will, and so brings the soul to embrace Christ.

I shall now apply this branch of the subject.

Use I. Of information. This shews us,

1 They have never found Christ, nor seen his glory, who have not closed with him, Psal. ix. 10. They who have not matched with Christ, have never yet seen nor known the glorious Bridegroom, John i. 10. 11. For all they have heard of him in the word, or seen of him in the sacraments, they are still unacquainted with him, and he has ever been a vailed beauty to them. A look of him with an illuminated eye of the mind, would have conquered their souls to his love, Is. xlv. 22.

2. They who reject Christ and his way, and think they have reason for so doing, must know that their judgement is not to be regarded; for they are blind men judging of colours. (1.) There are some who never made so much as a shew of trial of Christ and his way. They were estranged from God from the womb, and they have held even forward in their course of sin to this day, without changing; and they are making lies of Christ to themselves and others, Psal. lviii. 3. Poor souls, they know no better, they are under soul-ruining delusion. If their eyes

eyes were opened, they would hate what they now love, and love what they now hate, Tit. iii. 3. (2.) There are others, who, after a seeming trial made of Christ and his way, have cast them behind their back, 2 Pet. ii. 22. But neither have they ever got a discovery of him, for as long as they have hung on about Wisdom's gates, 1 Cor. ii. 8. They have got into the outer court, of prayer, the communion-table, a fair blooming profession: but they never got into the inner court, to see the King in his beauty. Let both know, that there is something in religion which they never knew to this day; and while they despise, they despise what they know not. And if they knew what they know not, they would as soon embrace death and hell, and throw away their own life, as do what they do.

3. Ye who have got such a discovery of Christ as has determined you to close with him, ye have found Christ, and happy are ye. All the people of God have not alike sensible enjoyment of Christ, Matth. xvii. 1. 2. nor alike measure of manifestations of him. Neither are their comforts of alike height, more than their downcastings are of alike depth. But that discovery of Christ which terminates in the soul's closing with him, is saving.

Use II. of trial. Hereby ye may try whether ever ye have found Christ or not. We have been long making the fashion of seeking, let us try whether we have come speed or not. If ye have got such a discovery of him, as has terminated in your souls closing with him, ye have found him. And ye may know it by these marks.

Mark 1. If ye have found Christ, ye will value the discovery as a matchless favour, and display of free grace, Matth. xiii. 44. Like as a poor man, travelling through a desert, in want of all things, would value his finding a covered table and all necessaries: so will the soul that has been seeking rest through the empty creation, and is still disappointed, value

value the discovery of a full Christ made to it, Psal. cxix. 162. Ye will admire free grace in it, and not impute it to your own pains and diligence, that ever ye had any acquaintance with him.

Mark 2. A found Christ will engage your esteem above all other persons and things, 1 Pet. ii. 7. He will be in your eyes *the chief among ten thousand.* The world, and all that is in it, will be but loss and dung in comparison of him, Psal. lxxiii. 25. However low thoughts ye had of him before, the market will be raised now, and the rate ye will put on him will be so high, as the compass of the whole world, nay the compass of mens desires, will not be able to afford an equivalent, an as-good, Prov. viii. 11.

Mark 3. The discovery of Christ in his glory, will shew sin in ugly colours, and fill a soul with self-loathing and abhorrence, Job xlii. 5. 6. Is. vi. 5. Delusion puffeth up, but real manifestations of Christ are humbling. As in the balances, one scale goes up when the other goes down; so the more Christ is exalted in the eyes of a sinner, the more sin and self are depressed. Doves dung and asses heads gave a great price in Samaria, when bread was not to be had: but when it came, they were no more valued. That light will discover the worthlessness even of one's duties, and shew one's own righteousness like a moth-eaten garment, held up before the sun, Is. lxiv. 6. and leave one poor in spirit before the Lord.

Mark 4. A found Christ will engage the sinner's heart and affections, loosing the bond betwixt them and other lovers, and dispose the soul to say as Is. xxvi. 13. *O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.* There is an overcoming glory in him, which being discerned does infallibly give him the preference, in the heart, to all competitors, Tit. ii. 11. A believing view of his glory fills the heart with desire after him, and love to him above and beyond all other things, Is. xxvi. 9. Cant. i. 3. Many a stroke

the

the law, perhaps, has given, to break the bonds of iniquity; but ſtill they hold the ſinner faſt. But when the goſpel-fire is ſet on in the ſoul, and thereby Chriſt is diſcovered in his matchleſs excellency to the ſoul, theſe bonds are burnt and melted down.

Mark 5. Chriſt being found, the ſinner parts with all for him, without reſerve; and when he has quitted all for him, he thinks he has a good bargain, Matth. xiii. 46 Where any reſerve is made, there is no ſaving diſcovery of Chriſt made there, who in his firſt appearance in the ſoul ſaith effectually, *If ye take me, let theſe go their way.* The ſoul parts with all ſin, (1.) In reſpect of affection, Rom. vii. 19. (2.) Of voluntary ſubjection, Rom. vi. 14. (3.) Of allowed reſidence, Rom. vii. 24. It parts with ſelf too. 1.) Civil ſelf, friends, credit, eaſe, *&c.* Luke xiv 26. Heb. xi. 24. 25. Deut. xxxiii. 9. 2.) Natural ſelf, even life itſelf is at his diſpoſal. All that a man hath will he give for his life: but one will not give a found Chriſt for it, Luke xiv. 26. And, 3.) Religious ſelf is parted with, whereby the ſoul *counts all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt*, Phil. iii.

Mark 6. A ſaving diſcovery of Chriſt transforms the ſoul into his image. The ſight of the moſt beautiful object on earth, cannot work a likeneſs to it on the beholders; but a manifeſtation of Chriſt does it, 2 Cor iii. 18. Love breeds likeneſs, and likeneſs nouriſhes love: and none ſee Chriſt in his glory, but they love him, and therefore do *put on Chriſt*, Rom. xiii. *ult.* labouring to *walk as he walked*, 1 John ii. 6. From that moment the ſoul finds Chriſt, it commences nonconformiſt to the world, being transformed, caſt into another mould, in reſpect of nature and actions, Rom. xii. 2. And when at death, the diſcovery ſhall be perfect, ſo will holineſs be, 1 John iii. 2.

Mark ult. They that have once had a ſaving diſcovery of Chriſt, will always deſire further diſcoveries of

of him, till they see him as he is, Exod. xxxiii. 18. *Shew me thy glory*, will be the language of their hearts. Here we have the Bridegroom's picture as it were in ordinances, in the word; and they who have once seen the beauty of it, will always be desiring more. Paul knew much of Christ, but his eye was not satisfied with seeing, Phil. iii. 10. Christ was the sum of his life, Phil. i. 21. the body of divinity to which he desired to confine his studies, 1 Cor. ii. 2.: for in the knowledge of Christ all religion lies; therefore the learning of Christianity is the *learning of Christ*, Eph. iv. 20. 21.

DOCT. II. *Sinners finding Christ, find life.*

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Unfold that life which sinners find finding Christ.

II. Confirm the point.

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. I shall unfold that life which sinners find finding Christ They find a treasure who find Christ, a treasure of life. To open it up, I will shew,

1. What life they find who find Christ.

2. What are the qualities of this life.

First, I will shew what life they find who find Christ. It is a life that goes as wide as the death they found in Adam, Rom. v. 15. *For if through the offence of one, many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.* It is a salve proportioned to that sore. The sinner's finding life in Christ implies, that without Christ he is under death, which therefore we shall take along with us. And always the more of Christ, the more life; and the less of Christ, the less life. The sinner then finding Christ, finds,

1. A life of *grace*, in regeneration, which is a spi-

ritual quickening of the ſoul, Eph. ii. 5. *Even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickened us together with Chriſt.* Man in his natural unconverted ſtate is ſpiritually dead, Eph. ii. 1. Adam eating the forbidden fruit, poiſoned himſelf and all his offspring, for it brought immediate death to them: it ſeparated them from God the fountain of life; and ſo they lie in their natural ſtate, as buried in the grave of ſin, void of all life and ſenſe in ſpiritual things.

But in the day of the ſoul's finding Chriſt, the Spirit of Chriſt enters into it, and quickens it, as Lazarus's ſoul entering into his body, while Chriſt ſtood by his grave. So the dead ſoul is raiſed, the dry bones come together, and are made to live. The man is endowed with a new vital principle, putting him in a capacity to move and act graciouſly, Gal. ii. 20. He is a new creature, as one raiſed from the dead. There is a new light let into his mind, a new ſet given to his will, a new regulation made on his affections: all is new, as by a firſt reſurrection.

2. A life of *favour* with God, Pſal. xxx. 5. *In his favour is life.* God is Lord of life and death, and we have forfeited our life to him by our rebellions. May not one ſay then, he is a dead man, who is out of God's favour; and he is ſecured for life, who enjoys it? A ſinner out of Chriſt is a dead man, in ſo far as he is dead in law, and the broken law has doomed him to die eternally, Gal. iii. 10. All the fearful threats and curſes of the firſt covenant, are twiſted about him as ſo many cords of death, binding him as a condemned criminal, till the day of execution.

But the ſinner finding Chriſt, the ſentence of condemnation is reverſed, he is no more a condemned man, Rom. viii. 1. Chriſt comes into the iron-houſe, makes a diſcovery of himſelf to the ſinner in chains, and there the match is made betwixt the Bridegroom and the captive daughter of Zion. The priſon-garments are taken off, and the marriage-robe is put on

the

the believer, Phil. iii. 9. Then God says, *Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom*, Job xxxiii. 24. So the chains of guilt drop off, and the prison-doors are set open to Christ to hand out his spouse by, and the face-covering that was on the condemned is destroyed. Now, who has any thing to say, why the prisoner may not go forth free with her Lord and Husband? Rom. viii. 33. Justice is satisfied, who had the claim against her: the law that laid her up, and kept her bound, has no more to demand, Gal. ii. 20. The debt is paid, the bond is got up, and torn in pieces, Col. ii. 14. The jailor therefore cannot keep her longer, and death which stood before her with a devouring mouth, is swallowed up in victory, Is. xxv. 8.

3. A life of *new obedience*, Rom. vi. 4. *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* By nature we are quite void of this life, John xv. 5. The soul in its natural state is never idle indeed, but ever working: but then all its works are dead works, Heb. ix. 14. which can never please the living God. The old man has his deeds in them that are out of Christ, and all their deeds are so: their very religious duties are dead works, and in them they are but as walking ghosts. They cannot perform one vital action in a spiritual sense, Gen. vi. 5. Psal. xiv. 3. Tit. i. 15.

But the sinner finding Christ finds newness of life. He is not the man he was. Christ not only brings him out of the grave of his natural state, but he looses all his grave-cloaths of reigning lusts, and sets him a pulling them off, and casting them from him, Col. iii 8. He gives him change of raiment. The man puts on Christ, personates him, walking as he also walked. Now his obedience is universal, Psal. cxix. 6. his heart is shaped out in breadth and length to the whole law of Christ. It is spiritual; it is a

cluſter of vital actions, whereof Chriſt is the principle, Gal. ii. 20. and the end, Phil. i. 21.

4. A life of *comfort*. *Non vivere ſed valere eſt vita*, 1 Sam. xxv. 6. 1 Theſſ. iii. 8. The natural man has the moſt uncomfortable life in the world. He has no ſolid ground of comfort, becauſe matters are quite wrong betwixt Heaven and him: he has no actual comfort, but as it were in a dream, when he drinks of the broken ciſterns, ſo as to forget his miſery, Job xv. 21.

But the ſinner finding Chriſt finds a life of comfort. He is put into a comfortable ſtate, as reconciled to God, and having his ſin pardoned, Pſal. xxxii. 1. And if at any time he want comfort, it is not becauſe the ground of it is raſed, for that can never be while the everlaſting covenant remains, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. but becauſe his eyes are held that he cannot perceive it, like Hagar at the well. And in his deepeſt ſorrows and diſtreſs, there is a ſeed of comfort that will ſpring up, Pſal. xcvii. 11. *Light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart.*

5. *Laſtly*, *Eternal life*, John xvii. 3. Man in his natural ſtate is a dead man, liable to eternal death in hell. And whoſoever lives and dies in that ſtate, cannot miſs to periſh for ever, Mark xvi. 16. Wherefore whenever God opens the ſinner's eyes to ſee his own caſe, he ſees he is eternally loſt if he get not help, Acts ii. 37.

But the ſinner finding Chriſt finds eternal life, John iii. *ult.* The ſecond death can have no power over him, from that happy moment. He commences an heir of glory, and heaven's happineſs is ſecured to him. Come death when it will, come judgement when it will, his happy ſtate is already determined by the word, and can never be reverſed.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew what are the qualities of the life which they find who find Chriſt.

1. It is a *divine* life, Eph. iv. 18. So it is the moſt excellent

excellent life. The vegetative life, by which our bodies grow, is common to us with the plants of the earth; the life of ſenſe, with brutes; the life of reaſon, with infidels: but this life exalts one to a rank of beings ſuperior to the reſt of mankind, namely, into the rank of ſaints partakers of the divine nature.

2. It is a life of *the whole man.* Sinners out of Chriſt are but half-alive, and that in the worſt half too: while their bodies are alive, their ſouls are dead within them, 1 Tim. v. 6. But on the ſoul's finding Chriſt, the ſoul is made alive too, and ſo the whole man lives; the better part is quickened. And as the dead ſouls of the wicked will ſecure the eternal death of their bodies too, death ſpreading itſelf from their ſouls to their bodies; ſo the life of the ſoul will ſecure the eternal life of the body, life ſpreading in like manner from the ſoul to the body, Rom. viii. 11.

3. It is a *pleaſant* life, Prov. iii. 17. Sinners are generally prejudiced in the caſe, as if it were an unpleaſant and uncomfortable life: but that is the opinion only of thoſe who are unacquainted with it; for David could ſay, Pſal. iv. 7. *Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increaſed.* It is true, the pleaſure of it is not expreſſed in the noiſy way in which the world expreſſes theirs: it is a water that runs deeper than to make ſuch a noiſe as the ſhallow brooks, and muddy ſtreams of the world's pleaſures do. But all the pleaſantries of the men of the world, are light as a feather in compariſon of the pleaſure found in communion with God, the ſenſe of his favour, and the ſerenity of conſcience: by this good token, that theſe will bear up a man in the greateſt diſtreſſes, where thoſe others evaniſh at the blaſt, Hab. iii. 17.

4. It is a *perſevering* life, that can never be loſt, Hab. ii. 4.—*The juſt ſhall live by his faith.* Compare Heb. x 38. It is a life that, from the moment it is given, ſhall never die out for ever, John iv. 14. The life of inherent grace may be very low, but can

never be loſt: one may loſe the ſenſe of the life of favour with God, but can never loſe the thing itſelf, John v. 24. They that now lead the moſt honourable and wealthy life in the world, death will put an end to it: but this life will make its way through death itſelf, unhurt.

5. *Laſtly*, It is a *growing* life, John x. 10. It is true, the Chriſtian life is not always growing, more than the trees in winter. But it is a life that grows univerſally, regularly, and proportionably, till it come to its perfection in glory, Prov. iv. 18. *The path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.* It buds in regeneration, begins to open in progreſſive ſanctification, and is full ſpread in glory: but it ſhall never wither, but be freſh and fragrant through eternity.

II. In order to confirm this doctrine, That ſinners finding Chriſt find life, conſider,

1. The Mediator, by the Father's appointment, is the immediate receptacle of life for all to whom life is deſigned by the Father, Col. i. 19; as the bowl in Zechariah's candleſtick received the oil from the two olive-trees, and communicated the ſame by the pipes to the lamps, Zech. iv. 2 3. God ſeeing all mankind dead in Adam, but having deſtined the elect number to life, has put life for them all in the Mediator, as in a ſure repoſitory, where it cannot be loſt, 1 John v. 11. hence the apoſtle draws the concluſion of our text, ver. 12. *He that hath the Son, hath life:* even as he who hath a woman in marriage, hath all that is hers; ſo he that hath Chriſt, not only hath a right to, but actually hath life, even everlaſting life, ver. 13. John v, 24. He that buys the field hath the treaſure in it.

2. As Adam loſt his life, and that of all his poſterity, by his loſing of God, who is the life and ſoul of the ſoul of man, Pſal. xxx. 5. in ſeparation of the ſoul from whom its death lies; ſo the ſinner finding Chriſt

Christ finds God again, and therefore must needs find life. God is in Christ, the fulness of the Godhead is in him, Col. ii. 9. and by him the believer comes to God, Heb. vii. 25. for that was the end of his death, *that he might bring us to God*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. The Father becomes his Father, the Son his Saviour, the Holy Ghost his Sanctifier; for a whole Trinity is made over to the sinner in the covenant, *I am thy God.* So finding Christ, the sinner finds the whole Trinity of persons: how then can he but find life?

3. The sinner finding Christ finds the Spirit of life. This is so certain, that *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. viii. 9. Not only do the graces of the Spirit dwell in them who have found Christ, but the person of the Spirit, the cause of the other, Rom viii. 11. This is that which gives them life, preserves it that it cannot be lost, increaseth it, and at length perfects it, John iv. 14. We see many who getting some light touches and common operations of the Spirit, seem to live for a while: but their seeming life wears away by degrees, and they never recover it: why? because not having found Christ, they have not found life, nor the Spirit either. But believers are recovered from their decays, because the Spirit of life still remains with them.

4. The sinner finding Christ, is united to him as a member of his body, Eph. iii. 17. Hence his life secures theirs, John xiv. 19. *Because I live, ye shall live also.* They cannot die, as long as he lives, and therefore their life is everlasting. As members of Christ, the Spirit of Christ dwells in them, as the principle of their life; and they derive spiritual nourishment from him, as the branches from the vine-stock. Hence it is that the resurrection of their mortal bodies is secured to them, according to Rom. viii. 11. *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from*

from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. So that finding Christ, they find everlasting life of soul and body.

5. The sinner finding Christ, finds all the promises of the everlasting covenant, which are all promises of life, as the threatenings of the law are of death, Tit i. 2. 2 Cor. i. 20.; for the promises are immediately made to Christ, Gal iii. 16. and in right of him they become ours. Hence *he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. Some would reckon themselves made up all their life, if they did find a parcel of bank-bills: but he that finds Christ, finds Heaven's bank-bills, which being presented to God, will get payment of them to the bearer, be who he will, and that such as will make him live happily through the ages of eternity.

6. The sinner finding Christ, finds a satisfactory answer to all the law's demands, which staves him off from life till they be satisfied. (1.) The law demands the debt of perfect obedience, if the sinner will have life, Matth. xix. 17. In Christ this is answered: for *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, Rom. x. 4. (2.) It demands the debt of punishment, for satisfaction of justice for sin done. The answer is, *I am crucified with Christ*, Gal ii. 20. Thus he has found a complete righteousness, in which the law itself can find no blemish nor defect. Thus the current of death towards the believer is stopt, and the waters of the curse are dried up: and life flows into the soul, and the blessing comes in room of the curse.

7. *Lastly*, To sum up all in a word, The sinner finding Christ, finds all things necessary to make him happy. See the believer's possessions, what he gets with Christ when he gets him, 1 Cor. iii. 22. 23. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all*

all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. Rom. viii. 32. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* There is a treasure in him, or he is a treasure, and the treasure becomes the believer's, Matth. xiii. 44. There are unsearchable riches in him, and they are all made over to the believer, Eph. iii. 8. Look to the whole of Christ's purchase, what he bought for poor sinners with his blood, and the soul finding Christ finds it all, and may say, It is all mine.

I shall now make some practical improvement of this branch of the text.

USE. I. Of information. This informs us,

1. That the best way for one's security in an evil day, is to have found Christ. This is a day of impending wrath, wherein God is threatening to cause death overflow the nations *. The true way to answer God's call in the dispensation of the day, is to seek Christ, that ye may find him; so shall ye find life.

1*st*, God is threatening to take away mens substance, the means of life, making the heavens as brass, and the earth as iron †. He has locked up in great measure the pastures of the field, so that the beasts groan under the sins of men. And no wonder, considering the sinful improvement that has been made of their prosperity. But if all should go together, it cannot break the true Christian, who finding Christ has found life, and may say as Hab. iii. 17. 18. *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:*

* Referring to the plague which had then broke out in France, and proved very mortal in several places, particularly at Marseilles.

† This refers to a great drought in spring 1721.

yet

yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

2*dly*, God is threatening to make death ride in triumph among men. He has been sweeping away multitudes abroad; and how can these nations think to escape, nations lying under the fearful guilt of former times, and who have been long busied in filling up their cup to the brim? All ranks in church and state have corrupted their ways; and when we consider the unnatural marriages, and unnatural murders, that have fallen out more than at any time ever I remember, I cannot but take them for presages, that the things which concern this generation are making haste, the hearing of which will make mens ears to tingle. Well, Sirs, happy are they that find Christ; for they shall find life, when death in its most frightful aspect shall seize a God-provoking generation, and make all their courage fail in one moment, never to recover.

2. There is no way to attain to holiness, and acceptable obedience in good works, without finding of Christ, or closing with him upon a saving discovery of him made to the soul. Find what we will, if we find not Christ, we will remain in a state of death: and all the reasons and motives that can be fetched from heaven or hell, will not quicken us; and therefore cannot put us upon the doing of the least good work; *for*, says Christ, *without me ye can do nothing*, John xv. 5. It is true, that, as, in an earthquake, dead bodies may fly from one place to another, by the force of the commotion, yet still void of life; so an unbeliever, by the fear of punishment and hope of reward, may work, as one for his life; but alas! his works are but dead works still.

3. The true way to holiness is the finding of Jesus Christ: John vi. 28. 29. *Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.* If ever

ever ye would be holy, believe; if ye would reach the highway called *the way of holiness*, betake yourselves to him who is *the way, and the truth, and the life*, John xiv. 6. As the dead man (2 Kings xiii. 21.) let down into Elisha's grave, as soon as he touched the bones of Elisha, revived, and stood up on his feet; so the dead soul meeting with Christ by participation of his Spirit is quickened. And as a wick put to a burning lamp is lighted, so as immediately they join flames, and burn on; so the soul finding Christ finds life, embraces him, and lives by him and to him.

4. Christ does not set his people to work for life, to procure life to themselves by their own working: he has given them life, a life that will never end, in their union with him, and bids them work from that life. The law or covenant of works says to them who are under it, *Do this, and live:* if ye will have life, work and win it, Matth. xix. 17. But Christ says to the poor tired creature, busy at labour in vain, Come to me that you may have life. And having come and received life, he sets it to work.

5. Faith and obedience are inseparable, John xv. 5. *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.* Rom. vi. 14. *Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* The life that sinners find, finding Christ, is without question, for the kind of it, a holy life: and the manner of one's working must needs be of a piece with the manner of one's being. When Nebuchadnezzar was driven from men to herd with the beasts of the field, he lived like the beasts. Men living in sin, walk in it, Col. iii. 7. And those who are blessed with a life that is holy in the nature of it, must needs be holy in their walk; and if that life were perfected, they would be perfectly holy. So where there is no holiness, there is no life, no faith, no union with the holy Jesus. Unholy professors are dead sinners, and will be buried out of sight

sight in the pit: Heb. xii. 14. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

6. *Lastly*, The one thing we have to seek above all things, for time and eternity, is to find Christ. For whoso findeth him findeth life, for time and eternity. And this is not the work only of the time of our first conversion to God, but the work of our whole lives, 1 Pet. ii. 4 compared with ver. 2. 3. For always the more we find of Christ, we have the more life, and the less of him, the less life. Finding Christ we find all for holiness and happiness. The Jews say, that the 613 precepts of the law are all reduced to this saying, Hab. ii 4. *The just shall live by his faith.* And the truth is, the sum of the Christian life lies here, Gal. ii. 20.

Use II. Of exhortation. Seek Christ until ye find him, and find life in him and by him. To press this, I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. Man is a seeking creature, Matth. xiii. 45. Sinners out of Christ are as busy seeking as others are, like the watch going as fast when wrong as when right. There is a void within, that would be filled; but the matter is, they go all wrong in their search. They are seeking a rest to their hearts in the creature, and a rest to their consciences in the works of the law: but in neither of these will they find what they seek. Turn ye, sinners, seek Christ; why seek ye the living among the dead? In Christ only is to be found what ye are seeking, rest to the conscience and to the heart.

Mot. 2. Now is the time he is to be found, Is. lv. 6. The day will come when he will not be to be found; and so the sinner has no more access to life. Remember the case of the foolish virgins, Matth. xxv. That is a heavy word, Prov i. 24. 26. *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;—I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.* And how stinging will it then be to think, that the time

time of seeking Christ was spent in seeking what cannot profit; and that then all access to him is lost for ever.

Mot. ult. Ye will be made up for ever, if ye find Christ; and undone, if ye find him not, Prov. viii. 35. 36. If one was taken up all the days of his life, seeking him, and should find him at last, all would be found to be well bestowed, Matth. xiii. 45. 46. And find what we will, if we should find all the wealth, honours, and pleasures of the world, it will not compensate the loss of a missed Saviour, Matth xvi. 26. But I will branch out this exhortation in two particulars.

First, Sinners, seek to find Christ, and to find life in him, by getting a saving discovery of him made to your souls. To press seeking of this saving discovery, consider,

Mot. 1. There is no closing with Christ, or believing in him, without a saving discovery of him made to the soul, Psal. ix. 10. John iv. 10. Men may believe in an unseen, but not an unknown Christ. There is an illumination in the knowledge of Christ, that is necessary towards the embracing of him. Without it the wounded soul will pine away in its wounds, not knowing the Physician; and the sinner in his sins, not knowing the Saviour.

2. All your labour in religion, without this, will be but working in the dark, and labour in vain, John xiv. 6. compared with Eccl. x. 15. What will all attainments in religion avail, without the knowledge of the main thing, *i. e.* the knowledge of Christ? Matth. vii. 22. we find some *prophesying in Christ's name, in his name casting out devils, and in his name doing many wonderful works*, who lose all their pains, because there was no saving acquaintance betwixt Christ and them.

3. The discovery of Christ is the most excellent discovery that men are capable of. Therefore Paul deter-

mined to seek after nothing but that, 1 Cor. ii. 2.; he preferred it to all other things, Phil. iii. 8. What though men be ever so well acquainted with the nature of the creation, and can dive into the secret mysteries of nature, with the reasons of the same? if they be unacquainted with Christ, it is but a bewitching vanity, and a gilded ignorance.

The knowledge of Christ appears to be the most noble, if one considers, (1.) The superlative excellency of the object, Col. ii. 9. *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* (2.) The way and manner one comes to this knowledge. Not by the light of nature; this cannot discover Christ to a soul: not by mere objective revelation in the word; men may indeed learn much of Christ that way, but may go to hell for it all: but by the light of the Spirit and subjective revelation, Matth. xvi. 16. 17. (3.) The certainty of it, which surpasses all demonstration, Heb. xi. 1. (4.) The usefulness of it. Other knowledge men may have, and perish with it; all the arts and sciences in the world cannot give life to the soul; but this is life, *eternal life* to them that have it, John xvii. 3. Wherefore all other researches are but laborious trifling, unless in so far as they are subservient to this.

4. Christ discovered in his glory will satisfy your souls, and arrest your hearts, Matth. xiii. 45. 46. "Be shut my eyes and ears," saith Luther, "and say, "you know no God out of Christ, none but he that "was in the lap of Mary, and sucked her breasts." What is the reason of the apostacy and backsliding of many, but that they were never brought into this inner-court of religion? If they had, they had been held fast. They had seen in him what is fully commensurate to the desires of a soul, and therefore had no occasion to have gone back unto the world and their lusts. This would be an anchor of the soul, in the midst of temptations, troubles, persecutions, and losses, arising from whatever quarter they

they may; and is the absolutely-best way to fix the heart.

5. Christ is a vailed beauty, an unknown Christ to the most part of the hearers of the gospel, and to all those to whom the Holy Spirit has not given saving illumination, Cant. v. 9. compare John i. 10. Beware he continue not to be so unto you. Seek to get the vail removed, that ye may see that in Christ, which the world left to perish in their iniquity never sees. The leading difference betwixt the wise and the foolish builders, and the wise and the foolish virgins was, the one had an illumination, the other had not.

6. *Lastly*, Without a saving discovery of Christ, ye perish, John xvii. 3. Is. liii. 11. Ignorance of, and unacquaintedness with Christ must needs be fatal to the soul, since he is the only way to the Father, and there is no salvation in any other. It is the great design of the gospel to bring souls acquainted with Jesus Christ; so where that is not reached, the gospel has not its effect; and where the gospel has not a saving effect, the law will take effect to one's condemnation.

I shall give you some directions for obtaining this discovery of Christ.

Dir. 1. Labour to be acquainted with yourselves, your own sinfulness and misery. And for that cause lay your hearts, lives, and state to the rule of the holy law. Conviction leads the way to saving illumination, the knowledge of the disease to that of the Physician, Acts xvi. 30. 31.

2. Seek the discovery of Christ in your attendance on public ordinances, Prov. viii. 34. These are the galleries where the King walks, the latteſſes by which he shews himself. See Psal. xlv. 8. There is the market where the eye-salve is to be bought of him. There Lydia's heart was opened. It is good to be in Christ's way, as Zaccheus was. And were we looking and longing for a discovery of him there, we would not long want it.

3. Seek the discovery of him in his written word, the scriptures, *for they are they which testify of* Christ, John v. 39. God's word is the great means of illumination, Psal. xix. 8. The psalmist found it to be so by experience, Psal. cxix. 130. *The entrance of thy words giveth light: it giveth understanding unto the simple.* It is the special instrument the Spirit uses for illumination.

4. Seek it earnestly in prayer, Prov. ii 3. 4. 5. When the disciples were together at prayer, the doors being shut, he manifested himself unto them. We are not to expect bodily discoveries of Christ; if we had them, they would not do our turn; the Jews saw him so, who believed not on him: but we are to seek a discovery of Christ in the glory of his person and offices, by the Spirit, which alone can be attended with saving effects.

5. *Lastly*, Whenever the Lord lets in the least beam of heavenly light into your souls, cherish it, though it may be painful by discovering your sin and misery; make much of it; after little, more may come, Hos. vi. 3.

Secondly, Seek to find Christ and life in him, by getting an interest in him. The soul then finds Christ, and has life, when it has got a saving interest in him. If you inquire how that interest is got? It is through faith. God hath given to us eternal life in the free offer of the gospel, and that life is in his Son, 1 John v. 11. Believe the word of the gospel with particular application to yourselves, receive and rest on him fiducially for life, the life of grace and glory, and ye have it. Wherefore come to Christ, that ye may have life. To press this, consider,

Mot. 1. Ye are invited to come to Christ, that ye may get life in and by him, Is. lv. 1. 2. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto*

unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Rev. iii. 20. *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* Here is an invitation to life, let not that complaint be made of you, John v. 40. *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* Consider,

1*st*, It is an offer the fallen angels never got. When Christ was born, there was good-will towards men, but no sign of it towards fallen angels. Yet they are in themselves a rank of beings superior to mankind, and he owed no more to us than to them. Only his sovereign pleasure made the difference. *How* then *shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*

2*dly*, It is an invitation not given to millions in the world, who are sons of Adam as well as we. Many kingdoms and empires in the world lie in darkness and the shadow of death, and no offer of life is made to them: but it is made to you.

3*dly*, It is the greatest offer that ever was or shall be, that Heaven can give and earth receive, admired by angels, and grudged by devils; and shall it be slighted by men? even an offer of the Son of God, and eternal life in him.

4*thly*, It is an offer frequently repeated. Now, sinners, Christ is boding himself and eternal life upon you. You have given him many refusals; but he will not yet take your refusal, but continues the offer.

Mot. 2. Christ is very willing to give himself, and eternal life in himself to you, John vi. 37. Consider,

1*st*, How ample and large the gospel-offer is, excluding none that will come, Is. lv. 1. forecited. Rev. xxii. 17. *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

2*dly*, There is no case a sinner can be in, that shall mar his reception with Christ, and partaking of life,

if he will come to Chriſt, Iſ. i. 18. *Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord: though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow: though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wooll.* Manaſſeh's bloodſhed and witchcraft, Paul's blaſphemy and perſecution, and Mary Magdalene's lewdneſs, hindered not their getting life in and by Chriſt. When he was in the world, he raiſed Lazarus when ſtinking in the grave, as well as the ruler's daughter newly dead.

3*dly*, He takes kindly notice of the ſinner's firſt ſteps towards him: the father met the prodigal ſon while yet a great way off. See Jer. xxxi. 18. 19. 20. He ſurpriſes ſouls with looks of kindneſs preventing them, Iſ. lxv. 1. as he did Paul, Zaccheus, and others.

4*thly*, He is at great pains with ſinners to bring them to himſelf for life. He ſtands and knocks; by convictions, ſurpriſing mercies, rods, and croſſes, he ſays in effect, *Why will ye die?*

Mot. 3. Ye are commanded to come to him, that ye may have life, 1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.* All the goſpel-invitations are commands; ſo that it is not left to you, whether to come or not; but ye are peremptorily injoined. Conſider,

1*ſt*, Ye are creatures, owing obedience to the commands of your Sovereign Lord; and therefore trample not on his goſpel-command.

2*dly*, How highly merciful and reaſonable this command is. All God's commandments are moſt righteous, Pſal. cxix. 128. But behold this is an eminently merciful and reaſonable one, that the creature ſhould ſeek the favour of its Creator; that man ſhould be at peace with God; that the poor ſinner ſhould go to the rich Saviour, the ſick to the Phyſician, the guilty flee to the city of refuge and live, and the dying ſoul have recourſe to the fountain of life.

life. And all this under the pain of God's displeasure.

3*dly*, What a mercy it is that there is not a countermand; that when Adam and his offspring fell, God did not forbid them ever to hope for the least grain of mercy; but graciously invites and intreats, yea, and commands them to come and partake of his favour?

4*thly*, It is such a command, that if it be not obeyed, God has no value for all your other obedience, 1 John iii. 23. John vi. 29.

Mot. 4. Ye need Christ, and ye need life; ye have an absolute need of both. Do ye not need grace, the favour of God, pardon of sin, the light of his countenance, the influences of his Spirit, the manifestations of his love? Without these ye can never be happy, but eternally miserable. O then seek to find Christ, and life in him.

Use. *ult.* Hereby ye may try whether ye have found Christ or not. The soul yet dead in sin hath not found him; but where there is spiritual life, Christ is found by that soul. How shall one know whether he be spiritually dead or alive? I will offer but three marks.

Mark 1. Spiritual light, not only let into the conscience, but into the heart, 2 Cor. iv. 6. John viii. 12. And that may be known by these two things.

(1.) The discovery it makes. The light of life shews a man his former darkness, making him say, *Once was I blind, but now I see.* It discovers sin in its sinfulness, not only as dangerous, but as loathsome and abominable; the sinfulness of heart-sins as well as of life-sins; the first movings of sin, as well as of sin ripened by consent or action; the man's own utter inability to help himself, and the need of Christ both for justification, and sanctification; Christ's preciousness, and perfect suitableness to the sinner's case. This is the discovery made by the light of life, or saving illumination, Luke xv. 17. 1 Pet. ii. 7.

(2.) The

(2.) The efficacy it hath on the ſoul, Matth. iii. 11. There are many who have a great deal of light; but it has no more efficacy on them to bring them from ſin to holineſs, than painted fire has to burn. But the light of life humbles the ſoul before God; cauſes grief for ſin and hatred of it, as contrary to God's holy nature and will; a holy deſpairing of help by ourſelves or any other creature; and a betaking one's ſelf to Chriſt for all, for pardon, and favour with God, for holineſs and happineſs, Phil. iii. 3.

Mark 2. Where there is ſpiritual life, there is ſpiritual ſenſe and feeling. In ſpiritual death all the ſenſes of the ſoul (ſo to ſpeak) are locked up; and they may be at ſome times very dull in thoſe who are ſpiritually alive. But it is evident, that in the quickening of the ſoul they are reſtored, and never loſt again altogether. The eyes of the ſoul are opened to ſee God, Chriſt, ſin, the world, and all things that concern the ſoul, in other colours than formerly. They hear his voice in his word and in his rod, and they diſcern it from all others, Cant v. 2. ſo that their great buſineſs is to anſwer his call They have taſted that the Lord is gracious; they have the witneſs in themſelves, that there is ſomething in religion more deſirable than all the profits and pleaſures of the world, 1 John v. 10. They can ſay from their experience, that all his *garments ſmell of myrrh, aloes, and caſſia*, Pſal. xlv. 8. that every thing about Chriſt is lovely and deſirable. The fulneſs of grace lodged in him, is ſavoury to them, Cant. i. 3. Their ſenſe of feeling is awakened: the burden of ſin they ſometime went lightly under, makes them groan now, and long to be rid of it, as ever a poor priſoner was of his chains, Rom. vii. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death!* Every limb of that body is a weight to them. And they are ſenſible of Chriſt's goings and comings, his hidings and manifeſtations of himſelf, and the power of his grace, Pſal. xxx 7. *Lord, by thy favour thou*

haſt

haſt made my mountain to ſtand ſtrong : thou didſt hide thy face, and I was troubled.

Mark 3. Where there is ſpiritual life, there is a kindly heat and warmth of the ſame kind. There is a threefold flame kindled in the believer in the day of his being reſtored to life, though it acts not alike vigorouſly in all, nor in the ſame perſon alike at all times.

(1.) There is a flame of *holy deſires*, Iſ. xxvi 9. They have longing deſires after righteouſneſs, both imputed and implanted, Matth. v. 6.; they are ſet for the one as well as the other. They have ardent deſires after communion with God in Chriſt, Pſal. xlii. 1. Hence the ſecret cries of the ſoul, *O that I knew where I might find him! O when wilt thou come unto me!*

(2.) There is a flame of *love* to Chriſt, Rom. v. 5. They love him above all perſons and things, Luke xiv. 26. They love his truths, his whole word; his commands, though ſtriking againſt their corruptions, Rom. vii. 22.; his promiſes, as the ſweeteſt cordials to a ſoul fainting under the apprehenſions of wrath, or prevailing of corruption; the threatenings of his word, approving them heartily as moſt juſt, Rom. vii. 12. Their hearts warm to any in whom God's image appears, and that becauſe of that image, 1 John iii. 14. They love his ordinances, Pſal. lxxxiv. 1. becauſe they are his inſtitutions, and the appointed means of communion with him.

(3.) There is a flame of *zeal* for Chriſt, Pſal. lxix. 9. They are concerned for his honour in the world, the thriving of his kingdom. It vents itſelf in indignation againſt ſin in themſelves and others, becauſe of the diſhonour it reflects on Chriſt, 2 Cor. vii. 11. in endeavouring to be active for God in their ſtation, and grieving for the ills which they cannot help, ſaying with David, *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, becauſe they keep not thy law*, Pſal. cxix. 136.

Sinners

Sinners interested in Christ, obtaining favour of the Lord.

PROVERBS viii. 35.

Whoso findeth me,—shall obtain favour of the Lord.

BY *the favour of the Lord* is not meant reconciliation, or a state of favour with God, for that is comprehended in the life found; but the benefits, fruits, and effects of God's favour, all along from the time the sinner is taken into favour. The word rendered *obtain*, signifies to *bring forth as out of a treasure or storehouse*. This treasure is opened to the sinner, and access to it granted him, upon his union with Christ, so that from thence he may afterwards bring forth as he needs.

The doctrine deducible from the words is,

DOCT. *A sinner once interested in Christ, shall obtain favour of the Lord, bringing it forth as out of a treasure to which he is allowed access.*

In handling this point, I shall,

I. Shew some things supposed in this truth, tending to clear the meaning of it.

II. Wherein the soul once interested in Christ shall obtain favour of the Lord.

III. Confirm the doctrine.

IV. Apply.

I. I will shew some things supposed in this truth, tending to clear the meaning of it.

1. There is a treasure of favour for poor sinners with the Lord, Matth. xiii. 44. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field*, &c. A treasure speaks preciousness, variety, and abundance. God's

God's favours are precious, becauſe of his infinite excellency; there is a variety of them, ſuited to all the caſes the ſinner can be in; and there is abundance of them, an inexhauſtible ſtock, ſufficient to ſupply them all, and that at all times.

2. This treaſure is locked on ſinners out of Chriſt, they have no acceſs to it, *being aliens from the common-wealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers from the covenants of promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 12. There is favour with God, but it is not for ſuch ſinners: the treaſure of wrath is their treaſure, Rom. ii. 5. They have no ſaving intereſt in the Mediator, therefore no ſaving intereſt in the treaſure of favour. It is hid in the field of the goſpel; but the field is not theirs, ſo not the treaſure neither.

3. The ſinner once intereſted in Chriſt has free acceſs to the treaſure, to bring forth from thence whatever he needs; hence ſays the apoſtle, Heb. iv. 14. 16. *Seeing then that we have a great High Prieſt, that is paſſed into the heavens, Jeſus the Son of God, —let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* But it may be objected, Is there not a free acceſs to that treaſure of favour proclaimed to all to whom the goſpel comes? *Anſ.* It is ſo. But we may conceive, as it were, a twofold door of this treaſure; the outer door, in the free offer of the goſpel, the inner door, even Jeſus Chriſt himſelf. Both are cloſed on fallen angels: the outer door is opened to ſinners of the tribe of Adam, that they may freely partake of it, if they will come in by the inner door; but till they enter by this laſt, they cannot reach it. But the ſinner once intereſted in Jeſus Chriſt is put in poſſeſſion of the treaſure, ſo as to have acceſs to it at any time thereafter, when he is diſpoſed to bring forth favour out of it, John x. 9. *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he ſhall be ſaved, and ſhall go in and out, and find paſture.*

4. Even

4. Even the ſinner when he is intereſted in Chriſt, will ſtill be needing, while he is in this world. It is true, he will never be again reduced to the extremity of total want, John iv. 14. but he will be under partial wants while he lives here, John xiii. 10. And there is ſuch an emptineſs woven into the very nature of the creature, that the ſaints in heaven, though they will feel no want, yet will not become ſelf-ſufficient by glorification.

5. *Laſtly*, As it is the privilege of believers, that they may, ſo it is their duty that they do, bring forth and fetch ſupply for all their wants out of that treaſure. They muſt ſtill have recourſe to it, in all exigencies; and they are welcome to it. They are let into it, by their union with Chriſt, and they ſhould make uſe of it in their daily walk. And when they come to heaven, they ſhall be filled from it for evermore, Rev. vii. 17. *For the Lamb which is in the midſt of the throne, ſhall feed them, and ſhall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God ſhall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

II. I proceed to ſhew wherein the ſoul once intereſted in Chriſt ſhall obtain favour of the Lord. They ſhall obtain it in all things, caſes, and conditions, which they meet with or ſhall be in. The promiſe is broad and large, Heb. xiii. 5. *I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee.* Rom. viii. 28. *All things ſhall work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpoſe.* Go it as it will with the nation, the church, or themſelves in particular, they ſhall always obtain favour. But it will not be amiſs to condeſcend on ſome particulars. They ſhall obtain favour,

1. In proſperity, when things in the world are in a thriving condition with them. That is what deſtroys many, Prov. i. *ult.* but it ſhall not deſtroy them, and that is a great favour, Job i. 10 *Haſt not thou made an hedge about him, and about his houſe, and*

and about all that he hath on every ſide? a hedge not only about his houſe, *&c.* but about him. Many have the former, while they want the latter, and ſo are ruined. There is a threefold favour that a gracious perſon may obtain of the Lord in this caſe.

(1.) Balancing grace, to make them carry evenly and uſefully in proſperity. Job got it in his proſperity, chap i 5. The ſun of proſperity ſhone on him, and he was helped of God to retain his tenderneſs, and to improve the ſmiles of outward providences to the honour of God. And conſidering what a corrupt nature the beſt have, and how ſlippery ground the world's heights are, they obtain favour of the Lord indeed, whom Satan gets not caſt over that precipice to their ruin.

(2.) Balancing providences, ſome ſuch mixture of bitterneſs in their ſweet cup, as keeps them from miſkenning themſelves, and makes them ſing of mercy and judgement; as the apoſtle experienced in his own caſe, 2 Cor. xii. 7. *And leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the fleſh, the meſſenger of Satan to buffet me, leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure.* It is no ſmall favour to the Chriſtian to have ſome thorn of uneaſineſs put under him while he is here, to keep him from lying down among the lions dens and mountains of leopards, and ſleeping in theſe dangerous places. Every rub a Chriſtian meets with in his way through the world, is a memorandum for him, that *this is not his reſt.* If that do not prevail, there is,

(3.) The change of the courſe of providence into adverſity. Many times that is as great a favour as a Chriſtian can meet with, Zeph. iii. 12. *I will alſo leave in the midſt of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they ſhall truſt in the name of the Lord.* Sometimes the Chriſtian begins to feather his neſt, and lie ſecure and forgetful of God: but God ſets fire to his neſt, and he is obliged to look to the God whom he

had forgotten. The world grows a burden to him, and God raiſes a wind that blows the burden off his back. And he draws away ſome gilded earth from him, that was drawing his heart from God.

2. In perſonal outward afflictions, to which the people of God are liable as well as others. O it is a ſad caſe with Chriſtleſs ſinners under affliction! they cry out under their trouble, but they are not bettered by it, Job xxxv. 9. 10. Nay, many are worſted by their afflictions, their ſpirits are embittered; they have no comfort from earth, and they have none, and apply for none from heaven. But the ſinner once intereſted in Chriſt ſhall obtain favour in this caſe.

(1.) They ſhall be bettered by it, Rom. viii. 28. foreelited. Though they may for a time be fruitleſs under affliction, and as a bullock unaccuſtomed to the yoke, yet they ſhall be brought to themſelves, and gain ſome ſpiritual advantage thereby. And that is no ſmall favour, to gather figs of ſuch thorns and briers.

(2) They ſhall be ſupported under it, Iſ. xliii. 2. *When thou paſſeſt through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee: when thou walkeſt through the fire, thou ſhalt not be burnt; neither ſhall the flame kindle upon thee.* Though with the one hand they be caſt down, they ſhall be held up with the other. They have fatherly pity and ſympathy in all their afflictions, Iſ. lxiii. 9. and in their moſt hopeleſs caſe the everlaſting arms are underneath them.

(3.) They ſhall have deliverance in due time, one way or other, that they ſhall not periſh in their affliction. Though the night be ever ſo long, the morning cometh; the days of their mourning ſhall end, Pſal. xxxiv. 19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*

3. In deſertion. Chriſt's ſpouſe may be under deſertion; the Lord may withdraw and hide himſelf from thoſe that are dear to him: they may for a time *walk in darkneſs, and ſee no light*, Iſ. l. 10. *go mourning*

mourning without the fun, and be ſo preſſed that they cannot contain themſelves from crying out, Job xxx. 28. All communication betwixt Heaven and them may ſeem to be ſtopt and blocked up, Lam. iii. 8. They may be under fearful terrors from the Lord, Job vi. 4. And this caſe may be of long continuance with them, as in Heman, Pſal. lxxxviii. 15. *I am afflicted and ready to die, from my youth up: while I ſuffer thy terrors, I am diſtracted.* But in ſuch a caſe they ſhall obtain favour of the Lord.

(1.) They ſhall never be totally deſerted or forſaken. Though the huſband may withdraw, yet the relation ſhall never be broken; nor ſhall they go out of mind with him, though they may apprehend themſelves to be forgotten, If. xlix. 14. 15. 16. They ſhall have now and then ſome gleam of light in their darkneſs, and a ſecret ſupport ſhall never be wanting, Pſal. cxii. 4. Deut. xxxiii. 27.

(2.) They ſhall not be finally deſerted, If liv. 6. Though he may be gone, he will certainly return. There is a ſeed of joy ſown, which though it lie ever ſo long under the clod, it cannot rot, it will ſpring up, Pſal. xcvii. 11. And for the ſpirit of heavineſs they ſhall get the oil of joy. And the ill reports which unbelief has ſpread concerning a trying hiding God, ſhall be proved falſe.

4. In temptation. While they are in the world, they are in the place of ſnares and temptations. Sometimes public temptations are going, compliance with which being faſhionable, it is hard to ſtand the ſhock. Private temptations are never wanting from a buſy devil, an enſnaring world, and an evil heart. Theſe are means of remedileſs ruin unto many. But in ſuch a caſe they ſhall obtain favour of the Lord. They ſhall either,

(1.) Be made to keep their ground againſt the temptation, and ſtand conquerors, 2 Cor. xii. 9. They ſhall have grace to diſcover the ſnare, and grace to withſtand the ſolicitations to comply with it. And

that is a great favour bestowed on poor, weak, self-emptied Christians, in whom grace from the treasure of favour does triumph; while others leaning to themselves are suffered to fall, Is. xl. 30. 31. The truth is, there is no temptation so contemptible, but it will lay a self-confident man on his back; and none so great, but by faith the weakest Christian may get over it, Phil. iv. 13. *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

(2.) At least temptation shall not get a complete victory over them, as over unbelievers: Luke xxii. 31. 32. *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.* Satan carried Peter far, even to the denying of Christ; but yet he found favour, that he could not get him all the length he would have had him. They may fall deep in temptation, but they will not be suffered to drown; *for the Lord upholdeth them with his hand,* Psal. xxxvii. 24.

5. Even when fallen into sin, the Lord will not leave them, nor cast them off, Heb. xiii. 5. They grieve the Spirit by their falls: so they may expect in that case, that God will withdraw the light of his countenance, that he will set a mark of his indignation upon their way, and it may cost them broken bones ere they recover. Yet in this case they shall obtain favour of the Lord.

(1.) God will not suffer them to lie still in it, but will raise them up again, John viii. 35. Some fall off, and are never recovered: but as for believers, not one of them shall be lost. God's love to them is through Jesus Christ; and forasmuch as he is always beloved of the Father, they shall ever be loved for his sake, Psal. lxxxxix. 30.—33. And love is active, to raise up the beloved party fallen.

(2.) While he raiseth them up, he will make their falls work for good, Rom. viii. 28. Out of the eater shall be brought forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.

sweetneſs. Satan ſhall be outſhot in his own bow. They ſhall thereby be let into a clearer view of the corruption of their nature, ſee more need of Chriſt and his grace, be more emptied of themſelves, and learn to prize imputed righteouſneſs more, and ſo be led more to a life of faith, and cloſe dependence on the Lord.

6. In a time of public calamity. We have all reaſon to look for ſuch a time on this guilty declining generation, that God will ſum up the old and new debts of Scotland, and charge them together upon the generation that is filling up the meaſure of our fathers. But come what will come, they that are once intereſted in Chriſt, ſhall obtain favour of the Lord.

(1.) It may be they ſhall be hid, and kept out of trouble, that the ſtroke ſhall not reach them, Zeph. ii. 3. The floods may ſwell, yet he that ſitteth on the floods can keep them from touching his own when he will; and often does ſo, Pſal. xxxii. 6. *Surely in the floods of great waters, they ſhall not come nigh unto him.* Whatever be the ſtroke that is ſent, every arrow has its commiſſion, and can touch none whom God will have ſafe, Pſal. xci. 7. as in the caſes of Noah and Lot.

(2.) If it do fall upon them, they may expect a gracious mixture of favour in it, Jer. xv. 11. *The Lord ſaid, Verily it ſhall be well with thy remnant, verily I will cauſe the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction.* And the Lord has often made his care of his people in common calamity, with the beautiful mixture of kindneſſes with ſharp trials, more deſirable in the iſſue, than to have been kept quite free, Rom. v. 3. This made Paul take a pleaſure in diſtreſſes, 2 Cor. xii. 10.

(3.) Though it ſhould come to an extremity with the child of God, yet the ſting ſhall be out of it, and ſo it ſhall do him no real harm. Death is the worſt of it, but the child of God may meet it with that ſay-

ing, 1 Cor. xv. 55. *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* The truth is, whereas the blessings of the wicked are cursed, the curses are changed into blessings to them that are in Christ, Rom. viii. 28.

7. *Lastly*, At death, and through all the ages of eternity. During life the wicked receive many common favours from the Lord, but at death that spring is quite dried up to them. But then the spring of favour to them that are in Christ, never to be interrupted any more, begins to flow abundantly. They shall then obtain favour of the Lord.

(1.) They shall then be perfectly freed from sin, and all inclination or temptation to it, Heb. xii 23. They will then get a full answer to that petition, *Lead us not into temptation.* The leprosy in the house will then be quite removed, when it is pulled down And the body of sin shall breathe out its last with the death of the body.

(2.) They shall be freed from all trouble whatever, and enjoy perfect happiness in the full enjoyment of God, Rev. xiv. 13. At the last day their bodies shall obtain the favour of a blessed resurrection, and soul and body shall be eternally glorified together.

III. I shall next confirm the doctrine, That a sinner once interested in Christ, shall obtain favour of the Lord. This is evident, if we consider,

1. They have a right to the whole treasure of favour through Jesus Christ, in whom they are interested, 1 Cor. iii. 22. 23.—*All are yours; and ye are Christ's.* It is the purchase of his precious blood, and a purchase made for them: and hence not only the love and mercy of God, but the justice of God secures their enjoyment of it, 2 Thess. i. 6. 7.

2. Jesus Christ is the dispenser of the treasure, the high Steward of the house of heaven. As he has purchased it by his blood, so the Father has put the dispensing or distributing of it in his hand, John v. 22. Matth.

Matth. xxviii. 18. Now he is their beſt friend, yea, he is their huſband, their head, and they are members of his body. How then can they miſs of obtaining favour of the Lord?

3. The enjoyment of it is ſecured to them by the covenant of promiſes. In the covenant there are promiſes ſuited to every caſe they can be in; all theſe are *yea and amen in Chriſt.* So being intereſted in Chriſt, they are intereſted in all the promiſes, 2 Pet. i. 4. Theſe are the ſeveral articles of their marriage-covenant with Chriſt, by which the whole treaſure of the favour of God is ſettled upon Chriſt's eſpouſed ones, for their throughbearing in time, and complete proviſion for all eternity.

4. *Laſtly*, They have each of them a private key to the treaſure, and that is faith; hence ſays our Lord, Matth. xxi. 22. *All things whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in prayer, believing, ye ſhall receive.* There is a cloud of witneſſes, Heb. xi. who did, and ſuffered great things; not by their own ſtrength, but by furniture from heaven: and how did they obtain it, but by faith, that ſelf-emptying, taking, receiving grace, out of Chriſt's fulneſs? They who can rightly manage this key, need never want, be their caſe as low as it can be: faith is a noble provider, bringing ſtrength to the weak, light to the blind, food to the hungry, cloathing to the naked, *&c.*

I ſhall ſhut up this doctrine with ſome improvement.

Use I. of information. It informs us, that,

1. Jeſus Chriſt is the way to the Father, and the only way, John xiv. 6. Whoſo would obtain favour of the Lord, muſt make him their friend in the firſt place. For he is the one Mediator, and all communication that we have with Heaven muſt be by him. They who place their confidence of acceptance with God in their duties, will obtain indignation and wrath, inſtead of favour from the Lord. For in Chriſt

Christ only God is or can be well pleased with one that is a sinful creature.

2. Those who are interested in Christ are made up for ever, their bread is baken for time and eternity. They are provided for all conditions they can be in, or circumstances they can be brought into. This is a plentiful treasure, and a treasure that has no bottom, which is made over to them in Christ. Alas! that ever any losses in the world should disquiet a believer, that *has in heaven a better and an enduring substance*, Heb. x. 34. He may put his gain in Christ in the balance with all worldly losses, and it will weigh down them all.

3. Those who are without Christ are without the favour of God, Eph. ii. 12. Common favours they may receive, but special favour is far from them. The truth is, the best things they get are blasted to them; hence their prosperity destroys them, and the very gospel of God is the savour of death to them. How can they have the favour of a holy just God, who are not reconciled to him in his Son, and clothed with his righteousness?

4. *Lastly*, It is believers own fault, that at any time they are not sufficiently provided according as their case requires. They may have it for the bringing it forth out of the treasure, John i. 16. The breasts are full, if we could suck of the divine consolations. The armoury is sufficiently furnished for the spiritual warfare, if we could bring forth the weapons. The promises which the believer is interested in, are the channel of conveyance of supply: but alas! faith is often wanting, which should draw it in through these means of conveyance. If we could believe, all things would be possible.

Use II. of exhortation, both to sinners and saints. And,

First, To sinners. Labour ye above all things to get an interest in Christ. O that I could engage you to this pursuit! Truly this is and ought to be made by

by you the great business of your life, the great interest ye are to pursue, John vi. 29. Ye are all pursuing some one interest or other; and carnal worldly interest is what has the greatest number of followers. I would exhort you to labour to secure an interest in Christ. To press this, consider,

Mot. 1. An interest in Christ is the most worthy interest ye can pursue. And I would commend it to you as such, as deserving your highest esteem and regard, as far excelling all the low and secular interests that can possibly engage your attention. It is the one thing needful, in comparison of which all other pursuits are arrant trifles.

Mot. 2. It is an interest that ye may now obtain. Christ is willing to be yours, and to confer upon you his whole fulness, all the riches of grace and glory. *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. To day, if ye will hear the voice* of Christ speaking in the gospel, *harden not your hearts.* Christ now calls you to come to him, that ye may have an interest in him. O then for the Lord's sake, and your own souls sake, delay not to come to him, that ye may have life, and obtain favour of the Lord.

Secondly, To saints. Labour ye to improve your interest in Christ, by bringing in to yourselves daily out of that treasure for whatsoever ye need. The treasure is opened to you, ye are allowed free access to it; improve your privilege, by bringing forth out of it suitable supply for all your wants.

Quest. But how is that to be done? what way can one bring forth supply out of the treasure of favour? *Ans.* By faith. Faith is the key of the treasure-door that opens it, the feet that carry into it, the hand of the soul that takes up the necessary supply, and brings it away, Heb. xi. Hence the believer is said to *live by faith*, Gal. ii. 20. it being that which by its communication with Christ maintains the spiritual life, and is the great provider for all other graces. Now, to manage this work successfully,

1. Ye

1. Ye muſt lay all your wants upon him. That moment that Chriſt and a ſoul meet in the way of the everlaſting covenant, the ſoul embracing him in the goſpel-offer, he ſays to the ſoul, as Judg. xix. 20. *Peace be with thee; howſoever, let all thy wants lie upon me.* Whatever ye want for ſoul and body, duty or danger, time or eternity, let it all lie on me. And this is agreeable to the marriage covenant, wherein the proviſion lies upon the huſband, 1 Pet. v. 7. Now faith is to ſay, "Be it ſo; from hence-"forth all my wants be on my Lord." And this implies two things.

(1.) Renouncing of ſelf-proviſion, or living on one's own ſtock and purchaſe, Matth. xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf.* Faith empties a ſoul of itſelf; it is a man's going out of himſelf to Jeſus Chriſt for all. While the proviſion brought from Egypt laſted, the manna fell not: and while men are buſy bringing forth of their own ſtore for their needs, the treaſure in heaven is locked upon them; but it is opened to the ſelf-emptied believer, Luke i. 53. *He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath ſent empty away.*

(2.) Truſting him for the ſupply of all your wants, betaking yourſelves to him to live wholly by him. Ye muſt be like a poor man, who can do nothing for himſelf, being utterly unable to work and win any thing, that caſts himſelf on his rich friend for all he needs, Pſal. lv. 22. 1 Pet. v. 7. It is a pithy deſcription of faith which we have, Ruth ii. 12. —*The Lord God of Iſrael, under whoſe wings thou art come to truſt*; for the believer is like a ſilly chicken, unable to preſerve itſelf from the bird of prey, getting in under the wings of the dam for protection.

2. Ye muſt lay your wants before him, table your complaints, and preſent your petitions unto him, upon whom all your wants are laid, Matth. xxi. 22. Thus Paul did again and again, and brought forth plentifully out of the treaſure, 2 Cor. xii. 8. 9. What God

God has a mind to give, he will yet have his people to ſeek. And this imports,

(1.) A free unfolding of your caſe to him, as to your beſt friend able and willing to help, Eph. iii. 12. Faith makes the believer pour out his heart to the Lord, Pſal. lxii. 8. Ye muſt unfold it freely, fully, without reſerve; for to do otherwiſe would argue diſtruſt. Many a time the believer's heart is full of griefs, ſorrows, and anxieties: but the beſt eaſe a pained heart can get, is pouring out itſelf in the boſom of a God in Chriſt, Cant. vii. 11.

(2) A reſignation of the matter into the hands of the Lord, Pſal. xxxvii. 5. He is infinitely wiſe, and the care of the whole houſehold of heaven is devolved upon him by his Father, John v. 22. He is to judge what wants are really fit to be ſupplied to every one, what meaſures of ſupply they muſt have, at what time the ſupply is to be communicated, and in what manner. And it is the work of faith, to leave all theſe upon him, and reſt ſatisfied in his wiſe diſpoſal.

3. Ye muſt believe the promiſes relative to the ſupply of your needs, Matth. xxi. 22. *All things whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in prayer, believing, ye ſhall receive.* God will have his people deal with him in the way of truſting of his word of promiſe. And the more firm truſt we have in his word, the more abundantly do we receive of his fulneſs. They are the breaſts of the divine conſolations, and faith ſucks the ſap of them, by believing them, Pſal. xxviii. 7. *The Lord is my ſtrength and my ſhield, my heart truſted in him, and I am helped.*

(1.) Ye muſt believe them as a ſure word, that ſhall certainly be made out, Pſal. cxix. 160. The unbelieving world take the promiſes but for fair words, which they will not truſt to: but do thou take them for ſure words, big with mercy and favour, which ſhall not miſcarry, but certainly bring forth at the ſet time, Pſal. xii. 6.

(2.) Ye

(2.) Ye muſt believe them with a faith of particular application, not only that they ſhall be made out to others, but that they ſhall be made out to you, Mark xi. 24. Jam. i. 6. 7. What canſt thou be the better of a ſalve not applied to thy ſore, or of a promiſe not applied to thy ſoul? The devils may believe that the promiſes ſhall be accompliſhed, but they cannot believe they ſhall be accompliſhed to them. In our national covenant we abjure the Pope's general and doubtſome faith. But alas! the applicatory and appropriating act of faith, whereby one appropriates Chriſt and his benefits to one's ſelf, is much fallen out of our divinity now-a-days, and is in hazard of being extruded, that it may not enter again. The promiſes are God's blank bills and bonds; if ye do not by faith fill up your own name in them, what will they avail you? But fill it up by faith, and come forward with them in your hand, ſaying with David, Pſal. cxix. 49. *Remember the word unto thy ſervant, upon which thou haſt cauſed me to hope.*

4. *Laſtly*, Wait and hang on about the Lord's hand confidently, till the ſupply come, uſing the means of God's appointment for it, If. xl. *ult.* Pſal. xxvii. *ult.* Faith and the uſe of means do ſweetly agree, ſo that they be means of God's appointment, Pſal. xxxvii. 3. And they muſt not be ſeparated. To uſe means without dependence on the Lord for the ſucceſs, is Atheiſm: to pretend to believe, and neglect the means of God's inſtitution, is preſumption. But be you in the uſe of means, and wait on him with confident expectation, that what is good the Lord will give. This is it which in the Old Teſtament is celebrated under the name of *truſting*, *relying*, and *ſtaying on the Lord.* Truſt repoſed in a generous man, is a ſtrong tie on him to anſwer expectation, Gen. xix. 8. And they who truſt in the Lord ſhall never be aſhamed.

Thus I have ſhewn you, how you may bring forth out of God's treaſure of favour. O ye Chriſtians who have

have intereſt in Chriſt, let this be your daily work; apply to the treaſure. For motives, conſider,

1. It is a high privilege, that it is open to you, and ye have acceſs to it; and will ye not improve it? If ye conſider that it is ſhut on the moſt part of the world, that it was opened to you by the blood of the Son of God, by the operation of the Spirit of God upon you, bringing you to embrace the everlaſting covenant, ye will prize that acceſs, and improve it. Had one ready acceſs allowed them to their prince's favour, would they ſlight it? No ſurely.

2. This is the Chriſtian life, by which true believers are diſtinguiſhed from hypocrites, even the life of faith, Gal. ii. 20. And what is that but the daily travelling betwixt their own emptineſs and the fulneſs that is in Jeſus Chriſt? Whereas the hypocrite lives upon his own ſtock, a ſtranger to communion with God, and drawing ſupplies from him in the way of believing. As ever ye would prove yourſelves ſincere Chriſtians then, take this way.

3. The want of this is the cauſe that Chriſtians lead ſuch poor lives as they do, Matth. xiii. *ult. He did not many mighty works there, becauſe of their unbelief.* Many who have cordially embraced Chriſt in the goſpel-offer, ſpend their time more in complaining of their wants, than applying to the treaſure for ſupply; more in doubting of their intereſt in Chriſt, than in improving it this way; in diſputing their right to the treaſure of favour in Chriſt, more than believing. And hence ſuch,

(1.) Unfruitful lives, little progreſs in holineſs, victory over corruption, uſefulneſs for God in their ſtations, *&c.* Col. ii. 6. 7. Little faith will always make little holineſs: foraſmuch as faith purifies the heart, and is the bleſſed inſtrument of the ſoul's communion with God, by which influences from heaven are brought down, without which the ſoul muſt needs be in a withered caſe.

(2.) Uncomfortable lives. God is *the God of conſolation,*

ſolation, Rom. xv. 5. and the way to obtain it is in the way of believing, ver. 13. The truth is, it is no wonder the Chriſtian, when he looks to himſelf, be diſcouraged, and drive heavily, ſince often he can ſee nothing there but weakneſs, darkneſs, and deadneſs: but faith looks to Chriſt, and ſees a fulneſs in him, and tells the ſoul it has all in him, *who of God is made unto us wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification, and redemption;* Col. ii. 9. 10.

4. This is a day wherein Chriſtians have much need to keep up communion with God, and live by faith, Eph. v. 16. It is a day wherein religion is like to die out, and the little of it that is left is in hazard of dwindling away, in principle and practice, into mere morality: it is a day of many temptations and ſnares, and withdrawing of the Spirit, and wherein judgement ſeems to be haſtening on apace, ſpiritual and temporal judgements too, for that men have not received the truth in the love thereof, and have walked in darkneſs while they had the light.

5. *Laſtly*, They are moſt welcome to the Lord, who come with the moſt holy boldneſs, and oftenеſt unto him, for ſupply out of the treaſure, Matth. xv. 28. *O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* Thoſe honour God moſt, who are moſt emptied of themſelves, and have moſt buſineſs in heaven, for ſupply of their wants. It is a pleaſure to have full breaſts ſucked: and there is a fulneſs in this treaſure of favour lodged in Chriſt. His fulneſs is not the fulneſs of a veſſel only to ſerve itſelf, but of a fountain to be communicated. O then bring forth daily out of it.

Unbelief

Unbelief the Sin againſt Chriſt by way of Eminency; and the Wrong done to the Soul thereby.

PROVERBS viii. 36.

But he that ſinneth againſt me, wrongeth his own ſoul; all they that hate me, love death.

THE preceding verſe gave us the happineſs of thoſe who are intereſted in Chriſt; this verſe gives us the miſery of thoſe who reject him. And in it we have two things.

1. A dreadful riſk ſome ſinners run; they *ſin againſt the Wiſdom* of God, and *wrong their own ſouls*. In which conſider,

(1.) The dangerous adventure they make; they *ſin againſt* Chriſt the Son of God. I told you, that Chriſt the perſonal Wiſdom of God is here meant. I muſt here inquire what is meant by *ſinning againſt* him. Chriſt being true God, every ſin men commit is againſt him, and wrongs their ſouls too. But it is not every ſin that is here meant; it is ſome ſin by way of eminency againſt the ſecond perſon of the Trinity; for it is ſuch a one as is conſtructed to be a hating of him, and loving death, which cannot be ſaid of every ſin. You know that the Holy Ghoſt being true God alſo, every ſin is in ſome ſort againſt him; yet there is a ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſo called by way of eminency: ſo here there is a ſin againſt Chriſt by way of eminency. Now thoſe ſins which have their denomination from the ſeveral perſons of the Trinity, reſpect them not ſo much in their eſſence, as in their office, operation, and work. The Father is Creator, and original Lawgiver; the Son Redeemer and Saviour; the Holy Ghoſt ap-

plier of Christ's purchase, Enlightener and Sanctifier. The first sin of Adam in him and us, and the sins of the Pagans still, are the sin against the Father, the transgressing the law of the Creator. The sin of gospel-despisers is the sin against the Son, as a rejecting of the gospel of Christ. The sin of obstinate and malicious deliberate fighting against God, is the sin against the Holy Ghost, as against the inward working of the Holy Ghost in them. All the world are by nature under the first, and so liable to wrath: but the Son of God is the anointed Saviour and Redeemer, by whom alone sinners may be recovered, John xiv. 6. He is the ordinance of God for sinners salvation. He is the remedy against sin provided by the Father; so the rejecting of this ordinance and remedy is the sin against Christ. That is, in a word, it is the sin opposite to the seeking and finding of Christ, ver. 34. 35. namely, not closing with, but rejecting Christ offered in the gospel, called the sin of *unbelief*, John xvi. 8. 9.

(2.) The effect of this dangerous adventure; *He wrongeth his own soul.* The word properly imports violence, and might be read, *He doth violence to his own soul.* So it is rendered, Zeph. iii. 4. He ruins himself, he is a self destroyer, a self-murderer. The man is lying pining away in his sin; Christ the Physician comes to his bed-side, saying, "Sinner, I offer "you life and salvation with myself." But he turns away, he will have none of him, he cannot part with his disease. So he wrongs his own soul; he dies of it. But there is more than that in it. The man slights Christ: who loses by it? Not Christ, not his messengers, but the poor unbeliever himself, Prov. ix. 12.

2. The nature of this practice, which shews what a dreadful risk it must needs be. But of that more afterwards.

Two doctrines may be deduced from the words.

DOCT. I.

DOCT. I. *Unbelief, or a ſinner's not believing, accepting, embracing, cloſing with, and reſting on Chriſt for ſalvation, is the ſin againſt Chriſt by way of eminency.*

DOCT. II. *The unbeliever ſinning againſt Chriſt by unbelief, wrongs his own ſoul.*

I ſhall illuſtrate each doctrine in order.

DOCT. I. *Unbelief, or a ſinner's not believing, accepting, embracing, cloſing with, and reſting on Chriſt for ſalvation, is the ſin againſt Chriſt by way of eminency.* That is, If a man deſigned an affront to the Son of God, if he were in a mind to pierce him to the heart, and put a ſignal affront on him, this is the way to do it, namely, to ſlight the offer which he makes of himſelf in the goſpel.

In handling this doctrine, I ſhall,

I. Shew what treatment of Chriſt it is, that is this ſinning againſt him.

II. Confirm the doctrine, ſhewing you, that unbelief is the ſin againſt Chriſt; that this treatment of Chriſt, in not believing in, accepting, embracing, cloſing with, and reſting on him for ſalvation, is ſinning againſt him in an eminent manner.

III. Improve the ſubject, in an addreſs both to ſaints and ſinners.

I. I am to ſhew what treatment of Chriſt it is, that is this ſinning againſt him. In the general, it is twofold.

Firſt, There is a doctrinal treatment of him, that is this ſinning againſt him. So Deiſts, Socinians, Arians, Papiſts, *&c.* ſin againſt him. I inſiſt not on this further than to warn you, that there is, at this day, in this iſland, appearing a greater diſpoſition to depart from the faith, than there has been at leaſt theſe thirty years paſt. Some in the neighbouring

land, not Papists, nor Prelatists, but Dissenters, are undermining the doctrine of the eternal Godhead of Christ; and some in this church are making woful advances towards obscuring the doctrine of the free grace of God in Christ. All which are the native bitter fruits of the generation's practical slighting of, and sinning against Christ, under the light of the gospel.

Secondly, There is a practical treatment of him, that is this sinning against him. And of this kind is,

1. Living ignorant of Christ, and the fundamental truths of the gospel, John i. 10. Grosly-ignorant persons are doubtless unbelievers. For how can they believe, who know not what to believe? how can they believe in Christ, who have no knowledge of him? Psal. ix. 10. They are slighters of Christ, who have means of knowledge, and yet know him not: they know him not, because they will not be acquainted with him, Job xxi. 14. *They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* And thus many proclaim their soul-ruining unbelief, by their slighting of ordinances and means of knowledge, and not profiting under them. Were there a physician in the country-side curing all freely, and if any should never use means to get acquainted with him, would not such persons be slighters of him, to their own ruin?

2. People's living insensible of their absolute need of Christ, Matth. ix. 12. He comes in the gospel, and offers himself with all his salvation to sinners, to every one that hears it. Why does he so, but because they must perish without him, and that they need him? But the most part find no pinching need of him, and therefore never come to him. This is slighting him with a witness, Rev. iii. 17. *Because thou sayst, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* The law is preached, and their misery without Christ is told them: yet are they never so far convinced as

to

to be pricked to the heart, Acts ii. 37. They have no more ado with him, than a hale and sound person with the physician.

3. Their not believing the doctrine of the gospel, the record that God hath given concerning his Son, 1 John v. 10. 11. In the gospel it is testified to us from heaven, That Christ alone is the great ordinance of God for life and salvation to poor sinners; that God hath placed that life in him, and offers it in and with him to them. This is the doctrine of the gospel; but who believes it? Isa. liii. 1. *Object.* Who does not believe it? *Ans.* Alas! that is the nature of the disease. Men may convince men who are hearers of the gospel of the sin of murder, adultery, &c.; but if the Spirit of God take it not in hand, they will not convince them of unbelief, John xvi. 8. 9. But for your conviction, (which may the Spirit carry home!), I will tell you, the treatment which Christ gets from most men, upon the back of the revelation of that record that God hath given of him to them, is such as that, 1 Sam. x. 24. 27. *And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?—But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? and they despised him:* and as that, 2 Kings v. 10. 11. 12. *And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana, and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage.* Of this treatment of Christ take these two evidences.

Evid. 1. Their not seeking after him with the utmost diligence, till they find him. Compare Prov. viii. 34. & 36. *Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching*

watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.——But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death. Paul believed the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and therefore pressed forward, Phil. iii. 14. If you were desperately wounded, and one told you of an infallible cure that one had, and which you might get: if after this notice given you, you did not with your utmost might and most laborious endeavours seek after it, would not all the world conclude, you did not believe there was such a remedy to be got by you? But your souls are thus wounded, and we tell you day by day, that there is an infallible remedy for them in Christ; and yet ye do not diligently seek after him till ye find him. May we not then say, with the prophet, *Who hath believed our report?* Is. liii. 1.

Evid. 2. Their seeking life and salvation another way. So do all unbelievers, who give not up themselves to utter despair. They leave the King's highway, John xiv. 6. and betake themselves every one to his own way, Is. liii. 6. God says of Christ, *This is the way, walk ye in it.* But they will not venture on it, but take another way, by which they turn their backs on Christ, and so sin against him.

(1.) The way of the law or covenant of works, namely, by doing to seek life, Rom. ix. 32. This is the way that all men naturally betake themselves to, and that every man abides in, till the grace of God bring him to Jesus Christ. The natural bias of the heart to it I have shewn elsewhere, together with the enmity of the heart against Jesus Christ *. It is little they do; but it is according to their doing, not according to their interest in the blood of Christ, that they expect to find favour with God. This speaks unbelief, and slighting of Christ with a witness; *for*

* See Fourfold State. state 2. head 1. under the title, *Of the corruption of man's nature.*

if

if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain, Gal. ii. *ult.*

(2.) The way of uncovenanted mercy. They pretend to do what they can; and where they come short, they expect that God will be merciful to them and forgive them; while in the mean time they do not consider that they can only find mercy being in Christ. Thus they do at least mix their own righteousness with Christ's, if they have any regard to Christ at all, Gal. iii. 12.

4. Their not believing the doctrine of the gospel upon the authority of a divine testimony, but on some low account. As to many pretending to believe in Christ, we may see the quite contrary in them to that, 1 Thess. ii. 13.—*When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God.* What belief they have of it, they owe to their education, not to regeneration; to the teaching of men, not to the teaching of the Spirit. What makes some Jews, Mahometans, Pagans, Papists, in foreign countries, namely, that it is the religion they were brought up in, that is even the thing which makes them Christians in our country. O Sirs, that is not faith in Christ, but real unbelief of him, and slighting of him, as receiving his doctrine not upon his own authority, and the testimony of the Spirit, but of man, John v. 34. If ever ye come to honour Christ by believing, your faith will be built on another foundation, John iv. 42. *Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

5. Their not believing the doctrine of the gospel with a particular application to their own case, or to themselves. Here is the trial of a convinced sinner. Christ said, Mark xvi. 15. 16. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that beheveth not, shall be damned.* Hereupon the apostle

apostle says to the jailor at Philippi, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*, Acts xvi. 31. And every minister of Christ may say so to every man, and God says it to every one to whom his word comes. So that although we do believe that Christ is able and willing to save all his elect, yet if I do not believe that he is able and willing to save ME, and that he offers himself to ME, I am still an unbeliever, and do sin against Christ. For,

(1.) The offer is general, and comprehends us all, Isa. lv. 1. Rev. iii 20. If any of you then believe it as to all others, and not as to yourselves, ye make God a liar, and do not believe his word; because though God says, The offer is to all that hear the gospel, ye contradict it, saying, that the offer belongs not to you, and that Christ is not willing to be yours.

(2.) What benefit can any man have by a general promise or offer of mercy from God or man, which he does not appropriate to himself? A king offers mercy to all the rebels that will take it: one says, "O but it is to all the rest, but not to me, I will "not venture out of my lurking-hole." Is not this a belying of the king, and a refusing of mercy, and slighting the offer?

(3.) How is it possible that one can accept, receive, and rest on Christ for salvation, if he make not a particular application of the promise of the gospel, or gospel-offer to himself? The acceptance, *&c.* must needs be founded on the offer, and can be no larger than the offer is: If I do not believe that God offers to be my God in Christ, I cannot accept him as such. If I do not believe that Christ gives himself to ME in the gospel-offer, I cannot accept, receive, and embrace, nor rest on him.

(4.) Wherein does our faith of the promises of the gospel go beyond the faith of devils, if it proceed not the length of application of them to ourselves? Jam. ii. 19. The devils believe the threatenings of God, and that with application, and they tremble: and that

that they believe the promises of God too in the general, that they shall be made out, we have no reason to doubt, when we consider, they believe God's faithfulness to his word, and therefore tremble in expectation of what he has threatened. And they know it is the same faithful God who has made the promises, that has made the threatenings. And now that for a course of five thousand years they have observed the promises still fulfilled in their time, we may be sure that they do expect the rest will be fulfilled too. Wherein then can our faith go beyond theirs, if we believe not the promise or offer of life and salvation to us in particular?

Wherefore in not believing, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, with particular application to ourselves, we sin against Christ, and wrong our own souls. Against this Satan bends his force, and under a vail of humility Christ is affronted by the unbelieving sinner: and indeed it is a mighty thing to believe this, over the belly of seen and felt vileness and unworthiness: but faith will make its way over it all, and honour Christ by believing his word.

6. *Lastly*, Their not taking, accepting, and receiving of Christ in the gospel-offer, and resting on him, for life and salvation, John i. 11. 12. The royal Bridegroom is slighted, sinned against, and affronted, when the offered marriage is neglected, refused, or shifted, or in any ways not concluded, by the sinful children of Adam; when the bride halts betwixt two opinions, and does not conclude the blessed bargain. And thus sinners sin against Christ,

1*st*, When the sinner will not take Christ, but holds by other lovers, namely, the world and lusts. There are two opposite parties in suit of sinners hearts, who are hearers of the gospel, Christ on the one hand, lusts on the other. These last have so engaged the hearts of many, that they give Christ the refusal, Jer. ii. 25. John v. 40. They see there is no dealing with both;

both; if they take Christ, they must let these go away; and therefore since they cannot otherwise have him, they will not have him. They cannot think of being deprived or abridged of their sinful liberty: so the offer of Christ is made them, but they will not accept it.

2*dly*, When the sinner dare not take Christ, or embrace him in the gospel-offer, fearing that he will never be his, nor give himself to him. This is the snare for the convinced sinner, and as effectually keeps him from Christ, as the love of lusts does the secure, Jer. ii. 25. One may see, that the former makes way for the latter. The ground of this is one's sinfulness and unworthiness seen and felt, which makes them to think it would be presumption in them to believe. Hence they say, as Luke v. 8. *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!* The hand of Joab is in this. Satan has two glasses to let men see their sins in.

(1.) A lessening glass, which he holds before the eyes of secure sinners, causing their sins appear little. Hence their enormous outbreakings, though habitual, are accounted but infirmities; and lesser sins, which the world makes no bones of, are accounted no sins at all.

(2.) A magnifying glass, which he holds before the eyes of the convinced sinner. And one may know that he is looking on his sinful self in Satan's glass, when he sees his own sinfulness so, as he cannot see God's mercy, the virtue of Christ's blood, and the efficacy of his Spirit, above his sinfulness; when the sight of the disease sets him farther from the Physician, and makes him stand off from Christ, instead of running to him; when instead of quickening him to embrace the remedy, it causes his heart to faint so, as he cannot put forth his hand to apply the offered cure.

That this is from Satan, is manifest, in that it is directly contrary, (1.) To the true use of the law in subserviency

ſubſerviency to the goſpel, Gal. iii. 24 The law diſcovers ſin, and the ſoul's miſery by it: but then the deſign of that to the hearers of the goſpel is, that they may be made to prize and run unto Chriſt. (2) To the ample declarations of love and mercy made in the goſpel, which ſhew that there is no caſe whatſoever ſo bad, but Chriſt is both able and willing to take it in hand, Iſ i. 18. & lv. 1. Rev. iii. 20. & xxii. 17.

3*dly*, When the ſinner dare not venture on Chriſt alone for ſalvation, but to ſtrengthen that bottom, goes about to render himſelf acceptable to God by his own obedience, Gal. v. 4 The covenant of works is ſo engrained in our natures, and ſo ignorant are we naturally of the myſtery of Chriſt, and the way of imputed righteouſneſs; that till the Spirit of the Lord ſavingly enlighten one in the knowledge of Chriſt, he will have but low thoughts of an imputed righteouſneſs as an unſecure way, and will therefore go about to ſtrengthen it by the addition of his own works; though it is but the attempting to mix clay with iron, that will not do. But the Spirit of the Lord, in the day of power, will carry men quite off their own bottom.

4*thly*, When the ſinner does not take him for all the ends for which he is appointed of the Father for ſinners, and in all his offices, but divides them, 1 Cor. i. 30. He is given to us for all in the goſpel-offer, for ſalvation from ſin as well as from wrath, to be our Prophet to teach us, our Prieſt to ſave us, and our King to govern us. When therefore the ſinner does not take him for ſanctification as well as juſtification, he is not received at all indeed, but ſinned againſt, and rejected as the ordinance for ſanctifying of ſinners.

Laſtly, When the ſinner does not believe, that he ſhall have life and ſalvation by Jeſus Chriſt. True faith may be accompained with many doubtings; ſometimes one may be ready to ſay, *My hope is periſhed from the Lord:* but it is plain, that where there is no

such persuasion in greater or lesser measure at any time, there is no faith.

II. I proceed to confirm the doctrine, shewing you, that unbelief is the sin against Christ; that this treatment of Christ, in not believing in, accepting, embracing, closing with, and resting on Christ for salvation, is sinning against him in an eminent manner. This will appear from some general considerations, and from a view of some particular pieces of malignity against Christ wrapt up in unbelief.

First, It appears from some general considerations.

1. Faith in Christ is an honouring of him in a special manner, John v. 23. 24. therefore unbelief must be a special dishonour done to him. Faith gives glory to the object of it, Rom. iv. 20. unbelief then robs him of that glory, and casts reproach on him. Faith puts the crown on Christ's head, Cant. iii. *ult.* unbelief pulls it off, and tramples it under foot. See then how good, necessary, and pleasing to Christ believing in him is; so bad, noxious, and abominable to him unbelief must be.

2. Unbelief is the great Antichrist in the heart, setting up there in downright opposition to the Son of God. The end of Christ's coming was to destroy sin, 1 John iii. 8. the effect of unbelief is to preserve sin in life and vigour. It is the soul and life of all other sins, the shield that keeps their heads and hearts hale: take it away, they all die, and the soul revives; leave it upon their head, and they all live, and the soul dies, John viii. 24. It is the general of the army of hell in mens breasts, against whom the word is given in the day of power, *Fight neither with small nor great*, but with unbelief, the king of sins, John xvi. 8. 9.

3. It is a sin that so ingrosses the whole soul to itself against Christ, that it leaves him nothing to take part with him against it. If a man sin against Christ by oppression, murder, *&c.* his judgement, reason, natural conscience, will in greater or lesser measure

plead

plead the Lord's cauſe againſt him, and will prepare the way for the Spirit's convictions. But as for unbelief, there is no help from them againſt it. The myſtery of Chriſt lies beyond the ken of mere reaſon, 1 Cor. ii. 14. how then can the blackneſs of the ſin of unbelief be diſcerned thereby, or the natural conſcience check for it? Nay, mere reaſon, in its corrupt ſtate, ſides againſt Chriſt with unbelief, in as far as the beſt way it knows, is the way of the law or covenant of works. So that on this occaſion, Meroz's curſe may light on all the faculties of the ſoul, *becauſe they come not to the help of the Lord againſt the mighty*, Judg. v. 23.

4. It is the ſin that ruins the hearers of the goſpel, with whom Chriſt has to do, John iii. 18. 19. *He that believeth not, is condemned already, becauſe he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil.* The poor Pagans who have not heard of Chriſt, ſin not againſt him in this ſort, John xv. 22. Whatever ſins the hearers of the goſpel may have been chargeable with, if they will believe in Chriſt, they ſhall never be charged on them: upon this point of believing, or not believing, turns their ſalvation, or damnation, Mark xvi. 16. Wherefore ſince it is the ruining ſin, it muſt needs be the great ſin againſt Chriſt.

5. It is equal to the groſſeſt ſins againſt the light of nature. The Phariſee could ſay, *I am not unjuſt, an extortioner, an adulterer;* the publican durſt not ſay ſo. But the one rejected the propitiation, which the other embraced, Luke xviii. 13. and ſo was accepted of God, while the other was rejected. You will bleſs God ye are honeſt, ſober men and women, no adulterers, murderers, *&c.*; but ye do not ſee the bloody ſin of unbelief, which is as ill as any of them, Iſ. lxvi. 3. *He that killeth an ox, is as if he ſlew a man; i. e.* An unbeliever is as a murderer in God's

ſight. Faith was the great duty under the Old Teſtament as well as under the New, ver. 2. And thoſe Jews who put their ſacrifices of oxen, lambs, and their incenſe, in the Meſſiah's ſtead, by unbelief were as murderers, *&c.*

6. It is above theſe ſins in odiouſneſs and hainouſneſs, Heb. x 28. 29 *He that deſpiſed Moſes law, died without mercy, under two or three witneſſes: of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath troden under foot the Son of God*, &c.? There was a conſultation of the Trinity concerning the making of man, and the reſult was, his creation after God's image. How great muſt thoſe ſins be, which, breaking the laws of his creation, do ſignally deface that image? There was alſo a conſultation of the Trinity concerning man's reſtoration, and the reſult was, the Son of God giving himſelf to the death for their recovery. How much greater then muſt the ſin of unbelief be, which of its own nature tends to make the whole contrivance vain? The Sodomites were great ſinners, and the Capernaumites unbelievers: which were the greateſt ſinners? The greateſt puniſhment by a juſt Judge ſpeaks the greateſt ſin: and ſo the Capernaumite unbelievers were the greateſt ſinners, Matth. xi. 23. 24.

7. It has none that goes beyond it but the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; and even it is unbelief carried to its utmoſt height, Heb. x. 29. Unbelief ſtrikes againſt the Father and the Son, caſting diſhonour on both, John v. 23. If to this be added a doing deſpite to the Spirit of God, the ſinner is at his utmoſt pitch of wickedneſs. And none are capable of the latter, but he that is guilty of the former.

8. *Laſtly*, It is a ſin directly ſtriking againſt the glorious office wherewith Chriſt is inveſted, and while he is in the actual exerciſe of that office, John viii. 49. The Father minding to recover the glory of his wronged attributes, and loſt ſinners of the race of Adam, inveſted his own Son in the mediatory office, that

that he ſhould build the temple of the Lord, and bear the glory. The Son comes in this his noble office, with his Father's commiſſion, to proſecute it for theſe noble ends: and unbelief rejects him as ſuch, and caſts diſhonour on him, Luke xix. 14. To do a perſonal injury to a king is a crime, but to do him an injury ſtriking againſt his kingly character and office, and that while he is in the adminiſtration of his royal office, is a crime of a far deeper die, than any merely perſonal injury done him. So the caſe is here.

Secondly, That unbelief is the ſin againſt Chriſt by way of eminency, appears from a view of ſome particular pieces of malignity againſt him wrapt up therein.

1. It is a deſpiſing him as the Father's choice. The voice of the goſpel is, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed*, Matth iii. *ult.* The unbeliever anſwers, *We will not have this man to reign over us*, Luke xix. 14. When man fell, God looked on the whole creation, and there was none found able to help him: ſo he made choice of his own Son, that the breach might be under his hand, Pſal. lxxxix. 19. This comes to be proclaimed in the goſpel; and as Samuel ſaid to all the people, *See ye him whom the Lord hath choſen, that there is none like him among all the people?* 1 Sam. x. 24. it ſays, *Behold my ſervant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my ſoul delighteth*, Iſ. xlii. 1. *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſin of the world*, John i. 29. But unbelief ſays, as 1 Sam x. 27. *How ſhall this man ſave us? and they deſpiſed him.* So unbelievers pour contempt on the choice. Aſk the unbelieving Jews, if they approve the choice? No; they ſay, it is *a ſtumbling-block.* Aſk the unbelieving Gentiles, if they approve it? No; they ſay, it is *fooliſhneſs*, 1 Cor. i. 23. Therefore do others as they will, they will not lay their weight on that bottom. Only believers cry, *Grace, grace* to the choice! a noble choice! *Chriſt the wiſdom of God, and the power of God*, ver. 24. compare Matth. xi. 6.

2. It is a trampling upon his love in undertaking the mediatory office. Man having sinned, justice demands satisfaction; the poor bankrupts cannot discharge the debt themselves, angels found themselves too weak to bear such a burden, sacrifice and offering cannot be accepted as a compensation for the wrong done to a holy God. The proposal is made to the Son, and respect to his Father's glory, and unhired love to sinners, makes him accept and strike hands, *Lo, I come*, &c. Psal. xl. 6. 7. And after all, unbelief says in effect, he might have let it alone; the unbeliever is not for life and salvation that way. Christ's Father is content, he is so, but the unbeliever is not, Psal. lxxxi. 11. How deep must the trampling on such love draw?

3. It is a treating of him as a liar and an impostor. The language of every unbeliever is that, John vii. 12. *He deceiveth the people.* Christ's name is *the Word of God*, by whom the mind of God touching the salvation of sinners is manifested to the world: he is by office interpreter of the Father's mind, the great Prophet and Teacher. He came from the Father's bosom, and reveals the way of salvation in the doctrine of the gospel. What is it not to believe him then, but to make him a liar? 1 John v. 10. And since the revelation made by him is upon such a weighty matter, the not believing it must needs infer the looking on him as an impostor. What then shall be given to that false heart, that thus sins against Christ? *Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper*, Psal. cxx 4.

4. It is a contempt poured on his precious blood, and the whole course of his obedience and sufferings. The believer by faith gets in under that blood, Heb. xii 24. but unbelief treads on it, chap. x. 29. This performance of the Son was looked upon as a sufficient mean to retrieve the Father's glory, and recover the sinner that was sunk lowest in sin and misery, Psal. lxxxix. 19. As such it is proposed to sinners

ners in the goſpel; but they will not receive it. And if ye conſider all the ſets of unbelievers, the bold contemners, that go on in their ſins, and hope for mercy; the legal profeſſors, that lay the ſtreſs on their own duties; the trembling unbeliever, that dare not come to Chriſt; the deſperate ſinner, that ſays, *There is no hope*: they will all be found agreeing in maintaining low unworthy thoughts of the glorious ranſom paid by Chriſt, and offered to them. The firſt ſay, All that was needleſs, God is merciful; the ſecond, It is too weak a bottom to truſt all to; the third, It may bear the weight of many, but it is too weak for theirs; the fourth, It can do nothing for them.

5. It is a fruſtrating of the ends of the death of Chriſt, as far as lies in the unbeliever's power. He had a long, ſore, and helpleſs travail of ſoul: he endured it in hopes of a glorious iſſue, Iſ. liii. 11. Heb. xii. 2. But did all treat him as the unbelieving part of the world does, the iſſue would be but as it were bringing forth wind. At the expence of the blood of the Son of God, a medicine is prepared for periſhing ſouls; but the unbeliever will not apply it, when it is brought to his hand: a feaſt is prepared, but the unbeliever will not eat of it; but ſays in effect, *To what purpoſe is this waſte?*

6. *Laſtly*, It is a declining of his government, and ſubjection to him, moſt reproachfully, Luke xix. 14. We ſee moſt of the hearers of the goſpel at this paſs with him; ſubject themſelves to whom they will, they will not ſubject themſelves to him; they ſtick by other lords. His Father has given him all power in heaven and earth; but they will not come under his power, as long as they can ſhift otherwiſe. There are many reaſons of this, but there is one that is little obſerved, namely, unbelief, they cannot truſt him. A wiſe people will not ſubject themſelves willingly to one they cannot truſt, Judg. ix. 15. compare Pſal. ii. *ult.* They cannot truſt him with their welfare, though he is the Father's Truſtee, the Truſtee of all believers:

believers: hence they ſay, he ſhall not be their Truſtee. What wonder then that unbelief be a *piercing of him?* Zech. xii. 10.

From this doctrine we may learn leſſons for ſaints, for ſinners, and for all.

Firſt, Here is a leſſon for ſaints, or believers.

1. Prize the precious faith which God has given you, 2 Pet. i 1. Have your ſouls been brought to believe in, accept, and embrace Jeſus Chriſt offered in the goſpel, for all his ſalvation, and ſo to come off from the courſe of ſlighting and ſinning againſt Chriſt? Do not undervalue it as a ſmall thing, but look to the nature of reigning unbelief, and prize it next to the gift of his precious Son and Spirit. If it were but as a grain of muſtard-ſeed, it is more precious than all the gold of the Indies, more precious than as many faithleſs works and duties, as would have filled up every minute of your time, ſince ye were born.

2. Wonder at his ſparing you till ye were brought the length of believing in him. How deep did your unbelief go againſt him; what attribute of his did it not caſt dirt upon; what was it he did or ſuffered, but it had an ill tale of? O, why did he put up all theſe affronts, and ſtill inſiſt on your believing, giving you his word, writ, ſeal, oath, and whatſoever could have been required of the moſt faithleſs man, to cauſe you believe him, till ye were won to faith in him?

3. Mourn over your remaining unbelief, as the father of the child did, Mark ix 24. who *ſaid with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.* Jealouſies of Chriſt are a diſeaſe that runs in the veins of all thoſe of the blood royal of heaven, ay till they get home to their Father's houſe. How juſtly may he ſay, *O faithleſs generation! how long ſhall I be with you? how long ſhall I ſuffer you?* Alas! can the ſaints experiences of his truth and faithfulneſs, and the tried word, carry them no further? If there could

could be any ſuch uneaſy paſſion as ſhame in heaven, they would bluſh for their unbelief whenever they got in there.

4. *Laſtly*, See what it is that mars the communication betwixt Chriſt and you, and what makes you lead ſuch a poor life, both in point of ſanctification and comfort, Matth. xiii. *ult. He did not many mighty works there, becauſe of their unbelief.* Faith purifies the heart, unbelief makes it as the neglected garden, overgrown with weeds. Faith quiets the heart and cheers it, Rom. xv. 13. David's experience of the way of getting help from heaven we have, Pſal. xxviii. 7. *My heart truſted in him, and I am helped.* Truſt repoſed in a generous man, able to help, brings him to put to his hand ſpeedily, for the help of the party truſting him No wonder that unbelief, being of ſuch a nature, mar the communication.

Secondly, Here is a leſſon for ſinners, or unbelievers.

1. Ye are ſinners againſt Chriſt in an eminent manner. Our text brings you in guilty of affronting the Son of God, ſinning againſt the remedy of ſin. Though the language of your lips may be, *Hoſanna to the Son of David;* the language of your unbelieving hearts is, *Crucify him.* Ye are guilty of ſinning againſt him at the rate which Pagans, yea and devils, never ſinned againſt him. They broke the law of their Creator; but ye have not only done ſo, but ye are breaking the law of redeeming love, namely, the law of faith, too.

2. Here is a ſin thou haſt to be ſenſible of, and mourn for, which hitherto thou haſt little regarded. May be thou haſt ſometimes been grieved for other ſins, and mourned for them. But didſt thou ever mourn for this? did ever this give thee a grieved heart? Truly this is the wound to the heart, this is the moſt dangerous evil, that keeps all the reſt from healing. If ye have not been ſenſible of and affected with it, (1.) Your faith is likely to be but a fancy, the Spirit being promiſed for that end, John xvi 8. 9. (2.) Your

(2.) Your unbelief would be ſure to be ſtrengthened by all your other mourning for ſin; and ſo inſtead of its bringing you nearer Chriſt, it would ſet you farther off from him, Matth. xxi. 31.

3. Here, even here, O ſinner, lies your ruin for time and eternity, John viii. 24. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins.* Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth not, ſhall be damned.* This is the great ſoul murdering ſin among goſpel-hearers, for it is the ſinning againſt the remedy of ſin. Conſider, (1.) It makes all your other plague-ſores incurable, while it is not removed, John viii. 24. Your pride, paſſion, worldlineſs, *&c.* ſtill run upon you: why, ſo they will always do, while the bloody iſſue of unbelief is not ſtopt. While that remains, they can admit no cure but a palliative one, after which they muſt needs break out again. For the falling dew ſhall as ſoon make its way through the flinty rock, as ſanctifying influences ſhall come into you without union with Chriſt, which is marred by unbelief. (2.) At this rate then ye muſt die in your ſins eternally, and your unbelief muſt be the great cauſe of your ruin, 2 Theſſ. i. 8.

4. The condemnation of unbelievers muſt be moſt dreadful, ſince it is the ſin againſt Chriſt, Matth. xi. 24. *It ſhall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgement, than for thee.* Other ſins wound the ſoul; this reſolutely keeps the wounds open, and will not ſuffer them to be healed. Other ſins are againſt the ſovereign authority of God in the law; this ſuperadds thereto a contempt of unparallelled love and mercy opened to the ſinner in the goſpel. As then the ſoureſt vinegar comes of the moſt generous wine, ſo the moſt fearful thunderclaps of wrath will break out on the ſinner, from the contempt of a throne of grace through unbelief.

5. *Laſtly*, Here is what may ſtrike the bottom out of all your objections againſt your believing in Chriſt; fetch them from what quarter ye will, and dreſs them

them up in what form you pleaſe, whether the concluſion be, you may not, dare not, or ought not believe on Chriſt. As it is the commandment, *That we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt*, 1 John iii. 23. ſo not believing is the ſin againſt Chriſt. Account ye of it as ye will, he will reckon it the greateſt affront that ye can do him, and he will reckon with you for it as ſuch. Wherefore let this ſhort anſwer ſerve in the caſe.

Thirdly, Here is a leſſon for all. It concerns us all to be convinced of the malignity againſt Chriſt and his Father that is in the ſin of unbelief, to get above it, as we would throw the coals of hell-fire out of our boſom; to believe in Chriſt, embrace him as our Saviour and Redeemer, Head and Huſband, and to live by faith on him. This is the way to honour the Son, the true way to be holy here, and happy hereafter.

Doct. II. *The unbeliever ſinning againſt Chriſt by unbelief, wrongs his own ſoul.*

Here I ſhall ſhew, how the unbeliever ſinning againſt Chriſt by unbelief, wrongs his own ſoul; and then deduce an inference or two for application.

I. I am to ſhew, how the unbeliever ſinning againſt Chriſt by unbelief, wrongs his own ſoul. The wrong here meant is real hurt or damage, ariſing from this woful practice. Now, on whom does it fall? On the ſinner himſelf. I take it up in theſe two; that he wrongs his own ſoul *really*, and *only*.

Firſt, The unbeliever ſinning againſt Chriſt by unbelief, wrongs his own ſoul *really*. He does in very deed do hurt and bring damage to himſelf, not to his body only, but to his ſoul, the more precious part. He does violence to himſelf, he treats his own ſoul cruelly and unjuſtly. He carries againſt his own ſoul as an enemy, doing it real miſchief. For by unbelief,

1ſt, A man keeps his ſoul in a ſtate of ſeparation and

and alienation from God. The sinner by nature is far from God, without God in the world, Eph ii. 12. Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father, John xiv 6. and unbelief keeps the soul from off that way, fixes the separation-wall, that as long as it remains in its power, the sinner can never meet with God, as rejecting the only meeting place.

2*dly*, A man keeps his soul under the guilt of all his sins. The blood of Jesus purgeth from all sin; but it must be sprinkled by faith on the soul, which unbelief refuseth, John viii. 24. It keeps the soul out of Christ; and while it is so, all the guilt remains, the yoke of his transgressions is wreathed about his neck, and all the cords of death abide about him in their force No mourning or sorrow, tears or repentance, will loose them; only the blood of Christ procures pardon.

3*dly*, A man keeps his soul in a state of utter inability to do any thing that is good or acceptable in the sight of God, Heb. xi. 6. *Without faith it is impossible to please him* It keeps the reigning power of sin hale in the soul, and so preserves and feeds the several lusts, the devourers of the soul It binds up hand and foot, that he can do nothing, nor move a step heavenward, John xv. 5. For it blocks up all saving communication between heaven and the soul.

4*thly*, It fixes the soul in a state of condemnation, John iii. 18. *He that believeth not, is condemned already.* It keeps it under the curse of the first covenant, and exposes it to eternal destruction. It keeps it naked without a righteousness, destitute of any valid plea for eternal life It leaves it without the city of refuge, every moment in hazard of being cut off by the avenger of blood.

Lastly, By refusing the remedy, the unbeliever brings double ruin on his own soul. The soul might be saved; but by unbelief salvation is refused, and so the soul is in worse case than if Christ had never been offered to it.

Secondly,

Secondly, The unbeliever sinning against Christ by unbelief, wrongs his own soul *only*, not Christ whom he sins against, Prov. ix 12. *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.* All sin is against the mind and honour of Christ, but no sin is against his happiness. If all the creatures did conspire against him, it could not make the least diminution of his happiness, or in the least disturb him Thy unbelief is like one's rushing his head against a rock, which can only hurt the person himself, Job xxxv. 6. *If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him?*

I shall conclude this subject with some inferences.

1. All unbelievers, rejecters of Christ, are self-murderers; they ruin their own souls, Ezek. xviii. 31. When it comes to pass that thy soul perishes, and inquiry is made, by whose hands it has fallen, there will be the decision, Hos. xiii. 9. *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;* not Adam, not Satan, but thou thyself, O sinner.

2. Ye cannot do your own souls a worse turn than not to receive Christ by faith. Many an ill turn ye have done them by swearing, lying, covetousness, *&c.* but this is a stab to the heart; this is wounding the soul in the most sensible, in the most noble part.

3. All unbelievers will be inexcusable. Pagans will have something to say, that the revelation of the way of salvation through Christ was not made to them; yea devils will have it to say, that there was no remedy prepared for them. But what wilt thou have to say for thyself, O unbeliever, who treadest under foot the blood of the Redeemer! Thou wilt be wholly without excuse. Thou wilt be like the man that sat down at the table, at the marriage of the king's son, without a wedding-garment, who when asked, how he came there not having a wedding-gar-

ment, was ſpeechleſs, having no excuſe to alledge for his preſumptuous behaviour.

4. Believe in, accept of, embrace, and cloſe with Chriſt, as ye would not ruin your own ſouls. Refuſe not the remedy that is freely provided for you in Chriſt. Ye are all invited and welcome to come unto Chriſt for ſalvation from ſin, and from the wrath that is to come. By accepting of Chriſt ye ſhall be ſaved, and your ſouls ſhall have communion with God. But if ye believe not, you ſhall periſh, and the wrath of God ſhall lie on you for ever. *He that believeth, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned*, Mark xvi. 16.

5. *Laſtly*, Saints and believers, in as far as ye admit unbelief, ye wrong your own ſouls. Every act of unbelief is a doing violence to your ſouls, and hurting them in their moſt eſſential intereſts. O then guard againſt this dreadful and deceitful enemy, that ſeeks your ruin. Daily exerciſe faith in Chriſt, improve it by vigorous and repeated exerciſe; and continually cry unto the Lord, ſaying, *Lord, increaſe our faith.* Live by faith, walk by faith, and, in the ſtrength of Chriſt, reſiſt all the aſſaults of unbelief; and in due time ye ſhall be more than conquerors through him that loved you. Always bear in mind, and never forget, that *he that ſinneth againſt Chriſt, wrongeth his own ſoul*, and is in love with death; whereas he that honoureth him by believing in his name, and is ſtrong in the faith, giving glory to God, ſhall be ſafe amidſt all the troubles and trials of this world, in every period and ſtage of life, and ſhall at laſt be received into the houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, where happineſs for ever dwells, and the voice of violence and wrong is never heard.

Believers

Believers a Myſtery, with a Deſcription of their Travels from the Wilderneſs of this World, to the heavenly Canaan, leaning upon Chriſt.

The ſubſtance of ſeveral ſermons preached at Etterick, June 18. 1721, and ſubſequent Sabbaths.

Song viii. 5.

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderneſs, leaning upon her Beloved?

WE have been ſolemnizing our ſouls eſpouſals to Jeſus Chriſt *, and our conſent to the goſpel-call, ſaying in effect to us, *Wilt thou go with this man?* Leave thy father's houſe, and thine own people, and cleave to the King of Zion. We have before angels and men anſwered, We will go with him, for he is our Beloved. Here we have an account of the Chriſtian life, which muſt be our life, if we will deal honeſtly with him: it is *a coming up out of the wilderneſs, leaning on our Beloved.* Theſe are the words of the daughters of Jeruſalem, containing,

1. An inquiry about a party, whom they took particular notice of, namely, the church of believers, the ſpouſe of Chriſt: *Who is this?* It intimates a kind of ſurpriſe, *Who's that!* The wilderneſs uſes not to afford ſuch a ſight as this. It imports an admiration as of ſome hidden thing, a myſtery: *Who is this?* This is a ſtrange kind of perſonage whom we ſee.

2. A character of the party inquired about. It is

* *viz.* June 11. 1721, when the author preached from Pſal. lxxxix. 19. which diſcourſe is printed at the end of the *View of the covenant of works.*

a woman, one of the weak ſex, as the church of believers is repreſented in ſcripture. She is not one of the dwellers in the wilderneſs. She appears not to have built her houſe there. She is but a traveller through it, and her head is awayward from it: and ſhe is ſet for another country. That is ſhe whom we mean, who is *coming up from the wilderneſs*. I make no queſtion but by the *wilderneſs* here is meant the *world*, as Cant. iii. 6. & iv. 8. with a plain eye to the Iſraelites coming through the wilderneſs to Canaan; the laſt of which, as it was typical of heaven, ſo the former is of the world.

But for the further underſtanding of theſe words, it is neceſſary to take notice of a cuſtom among the Jews at their marriages, to which there is here a manifeſt alluſion, *viz.* The bridegroom uſed to take his bride, and carry her out of the city into the fields, and there they had their nuptial-ſongs; and afterward he brought her back again, leaning on him, into the city, to his father's houſe, and there the marriage was ſolemnized. Now we may be ſure however, that theſe fields were not a wilderneſs or moorlands, no fit place for a bridegroom and bride's walk together. This then increaſes the wonder, What a bride is this that is coming up out of the wilderneſs with her Bridegroom, leaning on him! Others uſe to be entertained more ſoftly, and delicately; what a bride and Bridegroom are theſe! However here is repreſented the Chriſtian life, the life of the church of believers eſpouſed to Chriſt. In which obſerve two things.

1*ſt*, Her exerciſe: ſhe is travelling, upon her road away with her eſpouſed huſband, namely, Chriſt. The place ſhe is going from is the wilderneſs-world; the place ſhe is going to appears, from what is ſaid, to be her Bridegroom's Father's houſe. Her way is upward, her motion an aſcending, as the word imports; and here ſhould rather be read *going up*, than *coming up*, as Judg. xx. 21. ſince the decency of the parable

parable requires it, she being rather going from the place where the daughters of Jerusalem were, than to the place where they were.

2*dly*, Her posture, her travelling posture; *leaning on her Beloved.* This is what in New-Testament language is called *the life of faith:* for that is the spiritual leaning of the soul, and imports a fiducial persuasion. It bears, (1.) Her having her Bridegroom's company through the wilderness. He leaves her not there alone; he bids her go no where but where he himself will go with her. (2.) Her having his help up through the wilderness. She leans on him, as a weak woman on a journey leans upon her husband.

Three doctrines offer themselves from the words.

Doct. I *True believers, espoused to Christ, turning their back on the world, and walking heavenward with him, are a mystery, a strange sight in the world.* Who is this!

Doct. II. *The life of believers, as espoused to Christ, is a going up from the wilderness of this world, with him, to his Father's house in the heavenly Canaan.*

Doct. III. *The way to get up from the wilderness-world to the heavenly Canaan, is to go all along leaning on Jesus Christ by faith.*

I shall illustrate and apply the first two of these doctrines distinctly, and consider the third in a word of direction in the application of the second.

Doct. I. *True believers, espoused to Christ, turning their back on the world, and walking heavenward with him, are a mystery, a strange sight in the world.* Who is this!

In discoursing this subject, I shall,

I. Premise some things for right understanding the doctrine.

II. Shew in what reſpects believers are a myſtery, a ſtrange ſight in the world.

III. Give the reaſons of the point.

IV. Apply.

I. I ſhall premiſe ſome things for right underſtanding the doctrine.

1. Sin turned this world into an enemy's country in reſpect of heaven, and ſo into a wilderneſs. It was originally the ſeat of the friend of God, the confederate of heaven, innocent Adam; and then it was a pleaſant land. But ſin entering, it changed maſters, ſo that the devil is become *the god of this world*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. and it a wilderneſs, becauſe the primitive communication betwixt heaven and it is ſtopt, and a new one ſettled betwixt hell and this world.

2. All men by their firſt birth are natives of this world; their father's houſe is in it, the people of it are the people that are theirs, Pſal. xlv. 10. And *home is home, be it never ſo homely;* they love the wilderneſs, they deſire not to change, they know no better country, and they ſeek none better. They are pleaſed with the place, the company, and the manner of living; for they are all natural to them.

3. The Lord from eternity having ſet his love upon ſome of the natives, in due time comes in the goſpel into the wilderneſs-world, and making love to them, gains their conſent, and is eſpouſed to them in the everlaſting marriage-covenant, according to Hoſ. ii. 19. *I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteouſneſs, and in judgement, and in loving kindneſs, and in mercies.* Iſ. xliv. 5. *One ſhall ſay, I am the Lord's.* Thus he becomes theirs, and they his, and they are engaged to follow him whitherſoever he goes. Not only are they obliged by their contract of eſpouſals to go with him, but their hearts are ſo ſet upon him, that they cannot think of parting with him again, or ſtaying behind him.

4. Though the eſpouſals and the feaſt of eſpouſals are

are held in the wilderneſs, yet the place ſet for the conſummating of the marriage is Chriſt's Father's houſe in Canaan above, to which he begins immediately to carry his bride. She muſt no longer be a reſidenter in the world, a dweller in the wilderneſs, but muſt lift her heart and affections off her own people, and her father's houſe, and be going away homeward to Chriſt's Father's houſe, that the marriage may be conſummated.

5. This her going away up from the wilderneſs with her eſpouſed Huſband, is a going away in heart and affections; it is the ſoul's motion heavenwards in this life, the laſt ſtep of which is made at death. It is a gracious frame of heart, ſhining forth in a holy, tender, and heavenly walk. Every ſtep in the way of holineſs, in mortification, vivification, and contempt of the world, is a ſtep homeward to Chriſt's Father's houſe

6. *Laſtly*, Chriſt's bride at her waygoing, and ongoing with him thus, is a myſtery, a ſtrange ſight in the world. Her own country people gaze at her, to ſee her undertaking ſuch a ſtrange journey, turning her back on the beloved world, and ſetting out for a ſtrange country. Sometimes believers fall out of the exerciſe of grace, become untender in their walk, and grow ſo like the world, that they do not appear to be going up out of the wilderneſs, but rather pitching their tents there. But when they are in the exerciſe of grace, holy and heavenly in their walk, then do the ſpectators make the queſtion, *Who is this?* Like the Jewiſh rulers, who *ſeeing the boldneſs of Peter and John, and perceiving that they were ignorant and unlearned men, marvelled, and took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jeſus*, Acts iv. 13.

II. I ſhall ſhew in what reſpects believers are a myſtery, a ſtrange ſight in the world; the power of godlineſs appearing in their walk at this rate, ſo that it is ſaid of them, *Who is this!*

1. There

1. There is something very amiable about them, as we are told of the primitive Christians, Acts ii. 46. 47. that *they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.* There is a conscience within worldly men, as well as corruption; and what their corruptions will condemn, their consciences will approve as lovely, 2 Cor. iv. 2. Mens corruptions may get the management of their tongue, hands, and their whole external behaviour, and may set the man to run down piety, and the party in whom it appears: yet in the mean time conscience within their breasts will be applauding and admiring the godly man, as one who has something very lovely about him, as Balaam did in the case of the Israelites, Numb. xxiii. 9 10.

2 There is something very awful about them to beholders. Paul stands at the bar and reasons, and Felix sitting on the bench trembles, Acts xxiv. 25. John Baptist lies in his grave beheaded at Herod's command, and yet there he is a terror to Herod, Matth. xiv. 1. 2. The remains of God's image on man in point of dominion, has an awe and majesty with it, that affects the brutes, Gen. ix. 2. How much more has the restored image of God in righteousness and holiness shining forth in a Christian's life, a majesty with it, procuring an internal reverence to them from beholders! They are to them like men of another world, and every view they take of such writes death to them, Heb xi. 7.

3. There is something very mysterious about them, Zech. iii. 8. They are like foreigners in a country, apt to become a gazing-stock, a wonder, about which the natives cannot satisfy themselves. A believer marching heavenward, away from this wilderness-world, is,

(1.) A mystery to the men of the world, whether professors

profeſſors or profane. They cannot comprehend them, for they are God's *hidden ones*, Pſal. lxxxiii. 3. not hid from their bodily eyes, ver. 4. but from the eyes of their minds What a myſtery is that man to them, who ſets his feet and treads on that, which they ſet their hearts on and adore? who values, purſues eagerly, and by no means can be brought to part with, that which they can ſee no beauty in? whoſe principles, aims, and actions are diametrically oppoſite to thoſe of theirs? They are to them like men of another mould and make, which they cannot underſtand. Nay, they are,

(2.) A myſtery to themſelves, ay, ſo great many times, that they know not what to make of themſelves, what claſs to rank themſelves in, whether of ſaints or ſinners, Pſal. cxxxix. 23. 24. A true Chriſtian is indeed a bundle of myſteries; he on earth, and his Head in heaven, yet really and truly united! John xv. 5.; *crucified with Chriſt*, yet *living; living, yet not he, but Chriſt living in him*, Gal ii. 20.; not loitering, but *labouring*, yet *not he*, but *the grace of God with him*, 1 Cor. xv. 10. He is a man of two leading contrary principles, having a will and not a will to one and the ſame thing; he *ſins*, and yet it is not *he*, Rom. vii. 17. He has many ſpots and ſtains on him, yet is all *fair*, Cant. iv. 7.; *black, yet comely, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon*, chap. i. 5.; wanting many things, yet *complete*, Col. ii. 10. What wonder ſuch a one be in way of admiration inquired about, *Who is this!*

III. I ſhall give the reaſons of the point, That true believers are a myſtery, a ſtrange ſight in the world.

1. Becauſe they are ſo unlike the world, they are like ſpeckled birds among the reſt, 1 Pet iv. 4. They are caſt into the new mould of regeneration, and are come forth nonconformiſts to the world, Rom. xii. 2. They have got another ſpirit, than the ſpirit which all their people and their father's houſe are act-

ed

ed by, which caſts their whole converſation into a quite other ſhape than theirs, Numb. xiv. 24. So the unlikeneſs betwixt them makes them a ſtrange ſight.

2. Becauſe they are ſo unlike themſelves in former times. Saul among the prophets was a ſtrange ſight, 1 Sam. x. 11. But the grace of God makes a more wonderful change in a man from what he was before, as appears in Saul among the apoſtles, 1 Tim. i. 12, 13. What an obſervable change was there, that *he which perſecuted* the ſaints *in times paſt, now preacheth the faith which once he deſtroyed!* Gal. i. 23. Grace makes lambs of lions, caſts out the dumb devil, that they who cared not for praying, preaching, *&c.* but all theſe things were a burden to them, they cannot for the world live without them. It makes a new heart, a new life, a new man, *all things new*, 2 Cor. v. 17.

3. Becauſe they are very rare in the world; they are but here and there one for a marvel, Jer. iii. 14. The multitude in the world prefer the wilderneſs to Zion, and ſit ſtill in their native land, and will not go away with Chriſt. They have the goſpel-call, they are courted to match with Chriſt; but they think goſpel-invitations but idle tales, and they have beloveds of their own in the wilderneſs, which they will not part with for him. Some ſay with the mouth, they will take him, and ſubſcribe with the hand at ſolemn ordinances; but it is not a match, for their hearts were never truly for it; ſo they ſit ſtill too, and go not up with him out of the wilderneſs, but their carcaſes fall there. So that they who are going up out of the wilderneſs, being ſo rare, are a ſtrange ſight.

Use I. of information. It informs us, that,

1. Serious ſouls need not think it ſtrange, if they become a wonder to many, Pſal. lxxi. 7. They are not meet to go up with Chriſt from the wilderneſs, that are not content to become a world's wonder for him.

him. They must be fools for Christ that will be wise: Mark viii. *ult. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.* Worldly men wonder at seriousness now, what makes the saints so nice in points of truth and holiness: but that wonder will not last long, the world will soon see they had good reason for it all.

2. The world is no idle spectator of those who have given themselves to Christ, and profess to follow him. They take notice of them, and have their questions about them. Communicants, take heed to yourselves; many eyes are on you, as to your after-walk; God's eye is on you; the world's eyes will be upon you, they will take notice whether ye turn your back on the world, the ways and manners of it, or even sit still with themselves as before.

3. Those who shall still walk after the course of the world, continue sons of earth, not making away heaven-ward in their tenor of life and conversation, are not espoused to Christ; though they have given him the hand, they have not given him the heart. The sincerity of your covenanting with God, is now to be proved by your after-walk. If God be your Father, be setting homeward to his house. If Christ be your espoused husband, make away with him through the wilderness, and stay not behind. The friendship of the world is enmity to God.

4. *Lastly,* This world must be little worth, wherein, among such multitudes, there are so few such travellers, that they are a strange sight. There are many sad sights to be seen in the world, even after communions, but few of this sort, of persons turning their backs on the world, and resolutely walking heavenwards. Take heed, Christians and communicants, that one of these three questions be not put concerning you, instead of this in the text. (1.) Who is this standing still in the wilderness? like the door

on

on the hinges, oft moving, but never going forward, as proud, passionate, carnal, and sensual, as before? Is. v. 6. (2) Who is this going back from the wilderness to Egypt, to the flesh-pots there? back again to their profane and licentious courses? Better ye had never known the way of righteousness. (3.) Who is this sticking in some mire, fallen into some pit in the wilderness; some gross and scandalous abomination? Many such trophy gets Satan set up.

Use II. of exhortation. O Christians, communicants, walk so as the world may bear witness, that ye are going up out of the wilderness, leaning on your Beloved; that your faces and hearts are heavenward; that ye have set off from them, and are no more theirs.

This would be much to the honour of Christ and religion, Acts iv. 13. It would be a great kindness to the world lying in wickedness, as an apt mean to bring others away with you, Zech. viii. *ult.* It would be the safety and comfort of your own souls, Cant. viii. 4.

Ye will walk so, if ye be habitually heavenly in the frame of your heart, like Enoch *walking with God* Also, if in your conversation ye manifest a contempt of the world: *Germana illa bestia non curat aurum*, was Luther's character from his enemies. Likewise, if ye be just in your dealings in the world to a niceness, counting it always safer to lose a pound, than unjustly to gain a small penny. And further, if ye be clothed with humility and with humanity, meek, ruling your own spirits, doing good to all, even to those that wrong you; and are patient under trouble, and living by faith.

Doct. II. *The life of believers, as espoused to Christ, is a going up from the wilderness of this world, with him, to his Father's house in the heavenly Canaan.*

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

1. Take notice of some things supposed in it.

II. Unfold

II. Unfold the believer's life, as a going up from the wilderneſs of this world, typified by the Iſraelites going up from the wilderneſs to Canaan.

III. Make application.

I. I ſhall take notice of ſome things ſuppoſed in this doctrine. It ſuppoſes, that,

1. As ſoon as a ſoul is eſpouſed to Chriſt, it is looſed from the world Its taking of him is a letting this world go, Matth. xiii. 44. The unbeliever hugs and embraces this world as his portion, and purſues it as the main thing: but when he cloſeth with Chriſt, he ſaith, *Thou art my portion*, and the eſteem of the world ſinks, Phil. iii 8. Thoſe that are eſpouſed to Chriſt, are,

(1.) A looſed people. The bands with which the world held them, are looſed; they gripe not it, nor it them, at the rate they formerly graſped one the other, Gal. vi. 14. While the ſinner was without Chriſt, the profits and pleaſures of the world were ſtrong bands, which they could not get ſhaken off: but in the day of the power of converting grace, theſe give way, as tow does when touched with the fire. Then Chriſt ſays, *Looſe him, and let him go;* all is nothing in compariſon of Chriſt.

(2.) A ſeparated people. Though before they made one body with the world lying in wickedneſs, and were poſſeſſed with the ſame ſpirit of the world; yet, in the day of their eſpouſals to Chriſt, they are fairly ſeparated from them, 2 Cor. vi 17. even as a married woman ceaſes to be any more a member of her father's family, but becomes a member of her huſband's, Pſal. xlv. 10.

(3.) A new people. They are no more *men of the world*, though in it, Pſal. xvii. 14. but *heavenly* men, 1 Cor. xv. 48. They have *another ſpirit*, Numb. xiv. 24. a new principle, ends, motives, and manner of life.

2. The ſoul eſpouſed to Chriſt, being looſed from the world, is ſet in motion heavenwards, away from

the world, Pſal. lxxxiv. 5. 6. 7. That ſoul has begun a new journey, is ſet off in the Chriſtian race, that it may obtain the crown. Thoſe that are in heaven have come to a fixed point of happineſs: thoſe in hell have come to a fixed point in miſery: as to thoſe that are in the wilderneſs of this world, ſome of them are ſitting ſtill as in Sodom, till the fire of God fall on them and conſume them: others, even true believers, are making away, as Lot out of Sodom, and as the Iſraelites out of the wilderneſs into Canaan.

3. The believer's journeying heavenwards is attended with many difficulties. It is an up-going, and that through a wilderneſs. They that mind for heaven, muſt forego their own eaſe, and lay their account with troubles and trials of many ſorts. The way to deſtruction is broad and eaſy: if men will but ſit ſtill, they will be carried quickly down the ſtream into the ocean of an eternity of wo. But if one minds for heaven, he muſt force his way through many difficulties, Matth. vii. 13. 14 & xi. 12.

4. The believer's paſſage to heaven is alſo a work of time. It is not a leaping out of the wilderneſs into Canaan, but a going up out of it by degrees. It coſt Iſrael long forty years in the wilderneſs. And the believer is longer or ſhorter kept in the wilderneſs, as ſeems meet to his God. Some are not long ſet upon the way, when they are at their journey's end: others it coſts many a weary look to be at home.

5. Chriſt is with the believer in the journey. It is a weary land they have to go through, but they are not alone in it, Cant. iv. 8. In the day the ſoul is eſpouſed to Chriſt, he is united to him ſpiritually, and that union once made is never broken again. So that where-ever it is the believer's lot to go, Chriſt is with him, if it were through fire and water, Iſ. xliii. 2. He is never ſo far from him, but that his faith may get hold of him, and he may lean on him.

6. *Laſtly*, The end of this journey is a moſt comfortable one. Though the travelling be uneaſy, the

deſigned place of reſt is moſt deſirable, being Chriſt's Father's houſe, where the marriage is to be ſolemnized for ever, John xiv. 2. This is ſufficient to bear up the heart of Chriſt's ſpouſe through all the difficulties of the road; Heb. xi. 26. eſpecially conſidering that Chriſt himſelf goes all along with her, Heb. xiii. 5.

II. I ſhall unfold the believer's life, as a going up from the wilderneſs of this world, typified by the Iſraelites going up from the wilderneſs to Canaan. And here I ſhall ſhew,

1. How they are brought unto the wilderneſs.
2. How the believer is ſet into it.
3. How he is going up from it.
4. The hardſhips and inconveniencies of the road.
5. The advantages and conveniencies of it.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew you how believers are brought unto the wilderneſs. The world is not a wilderneſs to them and in their eſteem, till they be brought out of the Egyptian bondage of their natural ſtate. Then, and not till then, they enter into their wilderneſs-ſtate. And here one may remark theſe ſix things.

1. As the Iſraelites who came out of Egypt, went down into it in the loins of their fathers; ſo the elect of God were brought into their ſinful and miſerable ſtate in the loins of our firſt father Adam, Rom. v. 12. And we are all born in that condition, and draw our firſt breath in that unhappy region.

2. The natural ſtate of the elect is a ſtate of bondage and ſlavery. Satan, as Pharaoh, is their prince there, and holds them faſt at their drudgery, Eph. ii. 2. 3. They have many taſkmaſters there; as many reigning luſts as there are in their hearts, ſo many taſkmaſters are there holding them to their work.

3. As God, by the hand of Moſes the lawgiver, and Aaron the high prieſt, wrought the deliverance of the Iſraelites; ſo, by the law and the goſpel, he carries on the deliverance of the elect out of their ſtate of bondage. The law ſerves to awaken the ſinner,

and ſhew him his danger; the goſpel diſcovers the remedy: and the Spirit of God makes both effectual.

4 There is no leſs oppoſition made by Satan to the ſinner's deliverance from his ſpiritual bondage, than was by Pharaoh to the deliverance of the Iſraelites He is loath to loſe his ſubjects, loath to let his priſoners go. How often does the field ſeem to be won, and a fair appearance that the poor ſinners ſhall be let go? and yet there are new attacks to be made before he will ſurrender.

5. Ordinarily, whenever the deliverance is ſet afoot, the bondage becomes harder than ever before, Rom. vii. 9. Satan then muſters up all his forces, and rages more than ever, that he may make the ſoul deſpair of a delivery. Now is the ſoul hard beſtead, duties are bound on by the law laid to the conſcience, under the pain of the curſe, but no ſtrength afforded: ſo the ſoul ſees it muſt make brick while no ſtraw is given. And by this means their corruptions are irritated, that they appear more vigorouſly than ever before, Rom. vii. 5.

6. *Laſtly*, But at the ſet time, over the belly of all oppoſition, God brings his elect out of their ſpiritual bondage into the wilderneſs. There is a ſet time in the purpoſe of God for the delivery of every elect ſoul; and as at the appointed time preciſely Iſrael was delivered, Exod. xii. 41. ſo are they, Jer. ii. 24. And no ſooner do they comply with the goſpel-call, and leave the ſpiritual Egypt, but as ſoon this world turns a wilderneſs unto them. And young converts may lay their account with a hot purſuit from Satan to bring them back again, even as ſure as the Iſraelites met with it from Pharaoh. But they may be aſſured, that they ſhall get ſuch a deliverance as the Iſraelites at the Red ſea, which ſhall make them ſing.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew how the believer is ſet into the wilderneſs. When once converting grace has made a fair ſeparation betwixt the ſinner and the world, preſently he enters into a wilderneſs-ſtate.

1. He

1. He cares not for the world as he was wont, Gal. vi 14. Grace opening the eyes, the world appears in its own colours, no more a fruitful field, but a barren wilderness. The pleasantest spots in it appear lions dens and mountains of leopards. Its best fruits appear as the apples of Sodom, fair to look at, but being handled fall to ashes, Psal. iv. 6. 7. He sees there is no rest for his heart in it, and therefore must look above and beyond it. The men of the world are no more his choice; their way and manner of life he can no more away with.

2. The world cares not for him as before, Gal. vi. 14. No sooner does a soul begin to look heavenward, but presently the world turns a strange world to him, John xv. 19. He must be content to dwell alone, and not to be reckoned among the nations. He bears the image which they hate, he is entered on a course opposite to theirs: and so the friendship breaks up. And he may lay his account with all the opposition they can make him with tongue and hand.

3. Then it becomes, by God's appointment, the place of trial for him, as the wilderness was to the Israelites, Deut. viii. 2. God could have taken his people a nearer way to Canaan than the way he led them; but for their trial he led them so long in the wilderness. So he could carry each believer straightway to heaven after their conversion: but he will have them pass their trials before they come there: so they must be content to take up their cross and follow him, and so long stand candidates for glory, while one trial is put to them after another; trials that will prove the reality and strength of their graces, the multiplicity of their corruptions, and remaining vigour of them.

4. *Lastly*, It is no more his home, or his rest; but the place of his pilgrimage, of his sojourning, the place he must travel through in his way home to his eternal rest, Heb. xi. 13. He must look on himself as upon a journey, one that is not to stay here, but must be going forward to the heavenly country.

Thirdly, I ſhall ſhew how the believer is going up from the wilderneſs. He is going up from it,

1. By the courſe of nature, which is ſwift as a poſt, a ſhip, and as an eagle's flight. It is but a little time, and believers will be at their journey's end. Every day ſets them a good way nearer their eternal reſt, Rom. xiii. 11. If the days be evil, they are but few, and will ſoon be over. It is true, that by this way the wicked are going out from the world too, but they are not going up, but down into deſtruction.

2. In the habitual bent of his heart and affections. Believers hearts are turned off the world, and ſet on things above Their face is homeward, their heart is there before them; for Chriſt is there, their treaſure is there. Hence they are ſaid to be thoſe who *love Chriſt's appearing*, 2 Tim. iv. 8 and *look for him*, Heb. ix. 28. So while the carnal man is glued to this world, and deſires no better heaven than what is here, they are going away from it in affection and deſire.

But it may be the caſe of ſome gracious ſouls, that they cannot ſay, they are thus going up from the world, nay it is a terror to them to think of going out of it. I anſwer, There is a twofold deſire to be away from the world, and to be with Chriſt. (1.) There is an explicit deſire, like a roſe full ſpread. Such was that of Paul, Phil. i. 23. *I deſire to depart, and to be with Chriſt* This is found in believers, when they are not only in the exerciſe of grace, but have a full aſſurance of their eternal ſalvation. This makes the ſoul go up with full ſail out of the world. (2.) An implicit deſire, which is like a roſe-bud, where the leaves are to be found, if it be opened, though in the mean time they are covered, not being yet ſo ripe as to ſpread. This is found in believers, if they be at all in the exerciſe of grace, although they be in the dark as to their ſtate. It is found in the groaning believer, who is groaning under the remains of ſin, and would fain be free from them, groaning under want

of

of communion with God, and would fain have it, and that ſo as not to be interrupted any more, Rom. vii. 24. The Lord reads the language of theſe groans ſo, and there wants only a full aſſurance of eternal happineſs to make it plain language to the ſoul itſelf. See 2 Cor. v. 4. And thus the believer is going up from the wilderneſs, though with the wind in his face.

3. In progreſſive ſanctification, Prov. iv. 18. By faith the ſoul is ſet on the way to Immanuel's land: it knits him to Chriſt the perſonal way, it ſets him to holineſs of heart and life, the real way, or the walking in the way, Col. ii. 6. And the believer goes on while he goes forward in holineſs, eſpecially when he is growing, adding a cubit to his ſpiritual ſtature, 2 Pet. iii. *ult.* This going up appears,

(1.) In mortification, when the believer is dying to ſin, getting his former luſts weakened, Rom. viii. 13. Mortification is the daily taſk of a believer: the weeds of corruption in the heart are never ſo plucked up, but they will be ready to ſprout again. Theſe Canaanites are left in the land, that the believer may never be idle, but watch their motions and bear them down.

(2.) In vivification, in living to righteouſneſs, when the ſoul holds forward in the way of duty over the belly of all oppoſition, eſpecially in a holy and heavenly frame, going on in them with vigour, whether it be doing work or ſuffering work, Cant. iii. 6. The ſoul married to Chriſt is to be *for him*, according to the law of marriage, Hoſ. iii. 3. As we live by him, ſo we muſt live to him. This was Paul's practice, Phil i. 21. *To me to live is Chriſt.* More particularly,

4. In obtaining victory over the world, 1 John v. 4. The world is an enemy to all that are ſet to go up from it. And many times it prevails to retard their courſe: they are in it travelling in a ſtony, yea and thorny way, where there are many things to take hold of them, and hold them ſtill: ſo that they are in hazard of being entangled in the wilderneſs.

In

In this respect a believer goes up from the wilderness. And O but the picture of a believer thus going up from the wilderness is a beautiful one, Cant. iii. 6. *Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?* I shall essay to draw it in a few particulars. A believer espoused to Christ, and thus going up from the wilderness-world, is,

1. One who is keeping off from mixing with the men of the world, the natives of the weary land. Converting grace plucks them out from among them, and sets them over to Christ's side; and establishing grace keeps them from mixing again, Psal. xii. 7. There is a generation of God's wrath in the world, and they are labouring to save themselves from them, Acts ii. 40. They are deserters of their company, shunning unnecessary fellowship with them; for they know, that *a companion of fools shall be destroyed*, Prov xiii 20. And they consort with those who are followers of the Lamb, companions of those that fear God.

2. He is holding off from the ways of the world, Psal. xvii. 4 In the wilderness-world there are many ways, all of them leading to and terminating in some part of the wilderness; some to the world's wealth, honours, peace, *&c.* But there is one way that leads out of it, and terminates in the heavenly Canaan. The throng of the world goes in these many ways: but the believers, and they only, take the pilgrim's way, which does but lie through it, neither beginning nor ending in the country; and the grass may grow on it for the natives, they never set a foot on it, Is. xxxv. 8. The men of the world ply them to turn them aside, and take their way; and if they catch them napping, they readily get them off: but the traveller towards Zion says as Israel to the king of Edom, *We will go by the king's highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left*, Numb. xx. 17.

3. He

3. He has a low eſteem of the world's wiſdom, and holds off from it as from a falſe light that would lead the traveller into a quagmire, 1 Cor. iii. 18. 19. Carnal wiſdom has often been the ruin of Chriſt's intereſts in the church, and in the private caſe of Chriſtians; leading into a betraying of truth and purity; procuring outward peace, but wounding one's conſcience, and diſhonouring God. But they that are going up from the wilderneſs, will be no admirers of the world's judgement in the matter of truth and error, ſin and duty: for the generality of men have ever been, and will be, in that caſe, blind men judging of colours. And it is a dangerous thing to be carried away with the ſtream, Eph. ii 2. A man that has no heart to keep off a way, becauſe it is a way that is in vogue in the world, and will always row with the ſtream, is not going up from the wilderneſs. The fear of the world's putting the fool's cap on one's head, makes many a carcaſe fall in the wilderneſs.

4. He is keeping up a holy contempt of the world's good things, Heb xi. 24. 25. Its profits and pleaſures are ſinking in their value with him; he *counts* them *but loſs and dung, that he may win Chriſt*, Phil. iii. 8. To a gracious ſoul going up from the wilderneſs, the beſt things the world can afford, are ſo lightly eſteemed, that he will not think them worth pains to go off the King's high-way for them, as Numb. xx. 17. *We will not paſs through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells;* while others allured with theſe baits, fall into one mire after another, and quit the travelling company, as Demas did Paul.

5. He is reſolute to make his way through the world's ill things, to follow the way of God through good and bad report, Rev. xiv. 4. He is neither to be bribed nor boaſted by the world out of the way of his duty, Cant. viii. 7. *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give*

give all the ſubſtance of his houſe for love, it would utterly be contemned. His *feet* are *ſhod with the preparation of the goſpel of peace*, and blow what weather it will, he muſt hold on till he be at his journey's end.

6. *Laſtly*, His eyes are upon the other world; they are fixed on the prize, and running that they may obtain it, Heb. xi. 26. Their *converſation is in heaven*; they are habitually minding heavenly things; their affections are ſet not on things on the earth, but on the things that are above. But I proceed to conſider,

Fourthly, The hardſhips and inconveniencies of the wilderneſs-road, which the believer muſt lay his account with, while he goes up from the wilderneſs.

1. It is *a weary land* which the traveller has to go through, while he is going up from the wilderneſs, If xxxii. 2. David calls the whole of it, *the houſe of his pilgrimage*. However lightly the natives, the men of the earth, may live in it, there is never one born from above that is travelling through it, but it is a weary land to them. It was a weary time the Iſraelites had of it in the wilderneſs; their patience ſoon began to wear out. And there is never a child of God, but ſometime or other he has his fill of it, and being wearied longs to be at home. The Son of God himſelf, we find, wearied here, John iv. 6.

2. It is a road that lies through a waſte, affording no proviſion, Deut. xxxii. 10. When ſin entered into the world, a withering curſe followed on the back of ſin, and turned the pleaſant land into a waſte, barren place. There was a bleſſing in every thing in it before, but now every thing is embittered in it. There is enough to raiſe the appetite of luſts, there are huſks enow for them to feed on: but there is nothing in it to fill the ſoul, that is the produce of the country: and therefore the natives, though they are always feeding, they are never full. The Iſraelites would have ſtarved in the wilderneſs, if they had not been furniſhed from another quarter; for there was neither meat nor drink there for them.

3. It

3. It is an howling wilderneſs which they have to go through, Deut. xxxii. 10. becauſe of the wild beaſts that haunt there, Cant. iv. 8. devils, and wicked men influenced by the devil. Sometimes the traveller muſt hear them roaring, Pſal. lxxiv. 4. threatening to devour and ſwallow them up, and to make the name of Iſrael no more to be remembered, as the Egyptian wild beaſt did, Exod. xv. 9. *I will purſue, I will overtake, I will divide the ſpoil: my luſt ſhall be ſatisfied upon them, I will draw my ſword, my hand ſhall deſtroy them.* Sometimes he is entertained with their yellings, Jer. ii 15. Their blaſphemies, reproaches againſt God and his cauſe, their contradicting of the truths of religion, what are they but yellings of the wilderneſs, as ungrateful to holy ears as the yellings of beaſts in the night? Sometimes he muſt find them tearing him, his name, reputation, ſubſtance, yea and his fleſh ſometimes, Pſal. xxxv. 15. 16.

4. They muſt lay their account with ſcorching heats in it. Such was the wilderneſs to Iſrael, for which a cloud covered them by day. While they are upon the road through the wilderneſs, they are liable to fiery heats of deſertion from heaven; to fiery heats of temptation from hell, Eph. vi. 16. fiery trials of perſecution from men, 1 Pet. iv. 12. and fiery heats of contention and diviſion, the fire coming from the altar, Rev. viii. 5. All which make travelling Zion-ward to be very hard; and the more hard, the greater theſe heats are; which puts the ſpouſe of Chriſt to that prayer, Cant. i. 7. *Tell me, O thou whom my ſoul loveth, where thou feedeſt, where thou makeſt thy flock to reſt at noon.*

5. It is a ſickly place through which their way lieth. Many a groan was in the wilderneſs while Iſrael was in it: ſometimes there were fiery ſerpents biting them, and ſometimes a plague conſuming them, ſo as many carcaſes fell in the wilderneſs. No leſs ſickly a place is this world to the ſpiritual travellers. It is a heavy diſeaſe that is on them there, even

even a whole body of death, Rom. vii. 24. It affects and indiſpoſes the whole man. They are liable to frequent relapſes; and O the malignant influence it has on their journey, unfitting them for it, and at beſt cauſing them to go up but very ſlowly!

6. It is a difficult way through the wilderneſs. The road the travellers muſt go will try their patience, their ſtrength, *&c.* They that muſt needs have an eaſy way through the wilderneſs, muſt take the way that leads down to the pit, not the way that leads up to Immanuel's land.

(1.) It is all upward, which ſcares moſt men at it, Pſal. xxiv. 3. *Who ſhall aſcend into the hill of the Lord?* The way to heaven is up the hill, the way to hell down the hill.

(2.) It is a narrow way, Matth. vii. 14. Multitudes walk in the broad way, and there they get room enough, life-room, heart-room, conſcience-room. But the King's highway has no ſuch room in it, which obliges the travellers to take good heed to their feet, Eph. v. 15. And conſidering how raſh we are naturally, how weak-headed, falſe-hearted, how narrow the road is, how looſe the ground about it is, it is no great wonder that many of the travellers catch ſuch falls, as make them go halting to the grave, Pſal. li 8.

(3.) It is a hard and rugged way; and therefore they muſt have leg-harneſs, as ſoldiers had to preſerve their feet from ſtones and roughneſs in the way of their march, Eph. vi. 15. There are many difficulties to go through, which will need reſolution and undaunted courage.

(4.) It is a way wherein many ſnares are laid for them. In every lot in the world, and in the moſt innocent things, there are ſnares wherewith we may be caught. And ſometimes men are buſy making ſnares for us in the way wherein we walk.

7. It is a very ſolitary road, there is not much company to be got in it, Matth. vii. 14. Iſrael travelled

velled alone through the wilderneſs, ſave that a mixed multitude joined with them, that they were much the worſe of, and whoſe carcaſſes fell in the wilderneſs. See how Micah complains for want of company on the road, *Wo is me! for I am as when they have gathered the ſummer-fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluſter to eat: my ſoul deſired the firſt-ripe fruit*, Micah vii. 1. In Elijah's days there were ſo very few upon the road, that he thought he had been alone upon it; he had ſo little help of the ſeven thouſand, that he knew not of them, Rom. xi. 3. 4. At this rate the ſpiritual traveller has few,

(1.) To take a lift of his burden, Gal. vi. 2. Alas! we are in a ſtrange world, where there are many to lay a load above the burden, but few to take a lift of it.

(2.) To conſult with when he comes to a difficult ſtep. There are many ſuch ſteps that Chriſtians will meet with in their way to Zion, eſpecially when a miſt riſes in the wilderneſs. And it is no ſmall mercy to have honeſt and tender men to adviſe with, and to have their ſympathy and prayers. But of all theſe there is great ſcarcity in the wilderneſs.

8. *Laſtly*, It is a road, wherein they muſt meet with armed enemies come forth to attack them, and ruin them. Pharaoh and his army purſued the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, Exod. xiv. 3. Amalek fought them, chap. xvii. 8. both types of the devil and his agents. The Chriſtian life is a fighting life, 2 Tim. iv. 7. All is not done when they are converted, they muſt fight their way through the wilderneſs to Canaan, and ſo fight as to overcome, Rev. iii. 21. The concluding of their peace with God in Chriſt, is proclaiming of war againſt the devil, the world, and the fleſh: ſo they muſt put on their armour, if they would make their way through the wilderneſs.

Fifthly, I now come to ſhew the advantages and conveniencies of the wilderneſs-road. The people of God, while in the wilderneſs-world, have as much

allowed them from heaven as may balance the hardſhips of the wilderneſs.

1. The pillar of cloud to go before them in the wilderneſs; of which we have an account, Exod. xiii. 20. 21. 22. *And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderneſs. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light: to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.* It was a type of Chriſt. He leaves them not alone in the wilderneſs-world. Our Lord Chriſt is upon the head of the travelling company, Cant. iv. 8. and will be ſo till he have them all home. And this is ſufficient to compenſate the ſolitarineſs of the way.

The pillar ſeems to have been a fiery cloud, Exod. xiv. 20.; the cloud repreſenting Chriſt's human nature, the fire his divine nature: and to have been but *one pillar*, Numb. ix. 15. 16.; Chriſt one perſon in two diſtinct natures. A God vailed with fleſh, is the believer's company in the wilderneſs at all times: and even the man Chriſt travelled the wilderneſs-road himſelf too.

It had a dark ſide to their enemies, but a light ſide to the Iſraelites, Exod. xiv. 20. Believers ſee a glory in Chriſt which the blind world ſees nothing of, and therefore will not go up with him from the wilderneſs. The carnal world wonders at the believer's waygoing from the wilderneſs: alas! they ſee not what he ſees, the light ſide of the cloud goes before.

Now the cloudy pillar had a fourfold uſe to the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, in a ſpiritual ſenſe made good by Chriſt to his people in the wilderneſs-world.

(1.) They had the ſignal for marching or halting from it, Numb. ix. 17. *&c.* Their motions were directed by its motions. Thus the travellers from the wilderneſs-world are directed by Jeſus Chriſt their Lord

Lord and Head, on whom the truſt of bringing them ſafe to glory is devolved, If. lv. 4. *Behold, I have given him for—a leader and commander to the people.* They muſt not ſtir till he give them the ſign, though all the world, friends or foes, ſhould cry, March: if they preſume to do it, the cloud of glory will ſtay behind them, and they will find themſelves entangled in the wilderneſs. They muſt not ſit ſtill when he gives them the ſign to march, though all the world, friends or enemies, ſhould cry, Halt: if they do, they will find the cloud of glory will leave them, and their reſt be blaſted. Here lies their ſafety in the wilderneſs, in obſerving the word from Heaven.

(2.) It led them in the way, Exod. xiii. 21. They would ſoon have miſſed their way in the pathleſs wilderneſs. So our Lord Chriſt leads his people in their way through the wilderneſs-world, If. lv. 4. In the wilderneſs there are many by-ways, many to lead the travellers off the way, beſides a wandering diſpoſition in their own nature. They will never get through ſafe, who take the guiding of themſelves; but they who keep their eye on the cloud of glory before them, ſhall get through the moſt difficult ſteps of the wilderneſs-road, Prov. iii. 5. 6.

He leads his people through the wilderneſs, (1.) By his word, which they muſt take good heed to, as that which determines the way, If. xxx. 21. By his word he chalks out the path through the wilderneſs, and whatever agrees not therewith is but a by way, it is not the King's highway, If. viii. 20. *To the law and to the teſtimony: if they ſpeak not according to this word, it is becauſe there is no light in them.* (2.) By his example, which is the marks of his own feet upon the way, 1 Pet. ii. 21. Theſe we ſhould narrowly obſerve, that we may follow them: hence ſays our Lord himſelf, Matth. xi. 29. *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.* We are apt to follow example; whoſe example ſhould be ſo dear to us as his, who is our Father, Maſter, Huſband? *&c.* That we

might know how to walk through the wilderneſs, God himſelf came down from heaven, and in our nature walked through it. (3.) By his providence, which duly compared with the word, contributes much to clear the way, Pſal. xxxii. 8 *I will inſtruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou ſhalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.* Ye are to be then careful obſervers of providences, which are really way-marks in the wilderneſs, Pſal. cvii. *ult* (4.) By his Spirit, which renders all the reſt effectual, John xvi. 13. *When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.* He illuminates and cauſes to ſhine, the word, Chriſt's example, and providences. He illuminates the traveller too, as well as the way; diſpoſes, moves, and efficaciouſly leads the traveller on his way.

(3) It was a ſhelter to them from the heat of the ſun by day, Pſal. cv. 39. And ſo Chriſt ſhelters his people from the ſcorching heats in the wilderneſs, Iſ. xxxii. 2. & iv. 6. Let the heat of deſertion, temptation, contention with men, and perſecution, be never ſo great; Chriſt looked to by faith will be a ſufficient ſconce, Cant. i. 7. Many a time the gourds of created comforts are withered when the ſun is hotteſt in the wilderneſs. Sons of men are found vanity and a lie. But Chriſt's ſhadow is ever broad and refreſhing, Cant. ii. 3. and the traveller can never come amiſs to it.

(4.) It was a light to them by night, Exod. xiii. 21. There is many a dark night in the wilderneſs; and it is ſometimes the lot of the people of God to travel in the night, as well as it was that of Iſrael, Numb. ix. 21. But Chriſt is a light to them in the darkeſt hour of the night; hence David could ſay, Pſal. xxiii. 4. *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the ſhadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy ſtaff they comfort me.* Sometimes the ſun ſhines fair, and then there is no debate about the way: at other times a miſt and darkneſs ſits down on the wilderneſs, and then many

are

are put to a ſtand; then is a time of wandering, ſtumbling, falling over this and the other precipice in the wilderneſs. Many are lying fallen, and others come up and fall over them; and all becauſe of the darkneſs. What way can one get through in ſuch a time? Why, let them keep their eye on Chriſt the pillar of fire, and they ſhall have light in the midſt of darkneſs, Job xxix. 3.

2. They have proviſion allowed them from heaven in the waſte wilderneſs. And that muſt balance the ſcarcity and want there The King's country affords them proviſion for their journey. Iſrael in the wilderneſs were provided both with meat and drink; and ſo are they that are going up from the wilderneſs of this world. In the wilderneſs there is,

(1.) Manna for them to eat, even Jeſus Chriſt, to be fed on ſpiritually, John vi. 48—51. the only bread that can ſatisfy a ſoul. When the Egyptian proviſion is ſpent, the ſoul can no longer feed on the huſks of the world, then the manna falls, the ſoul taſtes the ſweetneſs of Chriſt, in his perſon, offices, and benefits. It falls down about their tent-doors in the word of the everlaſting goſpel, exhibiting Chriſt with all his benefits to the ſoul: and it is gathered and ate by the application of ſaving faith, believing Chriſt to be offered, and taking Chriſt to itſelf, believing that it ſhall have life and ſalvation by him. And the more cloſe, confident, and aſſured this application is, and the leſs mixed with doubting, the more the ſoul is fed.

(2.) Water out of the rock for them to drink, Exod. xvii. 6. This *Rock is Chriſt*, 1 Cor. x. 4. The Iſraelites might have periſhed in the wilderneſs for want of water, had it not been brought out of the rock: ſo had ſinners periſhed, but that the blood of Chriſt was ſhed for their life. Behold Chriſt ſmitten by the law, before he could be drink to our ſouls.—Coſtly proviſion for the travellers! this is their proviſion till they come to Canaan's land.

3 Sometimes they are allowed a ſong in the weary land, for their comfort and recreation by the way, Pſal. cxix. 54 *Thy ſtatutes have been my ſongs in the houſe of my pilgrimage.* We find Iſrael in the wilderneſs often complaining, groaning, and mourning; that is the ordinary in the wilderneſs-world; but ſeldom ſinging, that is reſerved for the exerciſe in the promiſed land. Yet I find Iſrael ſinging in the wilderneſs three times.

(1.) At their entry into the wilderneſs, juſt after they came out from the Red ſea, Exod. xv. So young converts frequently have a parcel of pleaſant days at their firſt ſetting off in the wilderneſs-journey, Hoſ. ii. 14. Religion is new to them; they are like men newly brought out of a dark dungeon, to whom the light has a double ſweetneſs; and the Lord even ſo deals with them, as fathers with their children who are learning to go, holding out an apple to them, which they are not to expect when they are more confirmed: and further, it is even to fit them for the hardſhips which they are afterwards to meet with.

(2.) When they were far on in the wilderneſs, and had been long in it, they ſang upon the occaſion of God's giving them a well without their complaining, or ſo much as aſking for it, Numb. xxi. 17. *Then Iſrael ſang this ſong, Spring up, O well, ſing ye unto it.* Many a heavy day had gone over their head between that and the laſt ſong they had had, (I reckon not their ſong at the idolatry of the golden calf, Exod. xxxii. 18. which ended in ſorrow). The fiery ſerpents had been among them a little before. Yet God made them ſing again. Thus ſometimes God ſurpriſes the travellers with mercy after many a heavy day, that they think they will never ſing more, and their ſouls have forgotten joy: yet he cauſes them take down their harps from the willows, and puts a new ſong in their mouth; while he cauſes the wells of ſalvation ſpring up to them.

(3.) In their laſt ſtation in the wilderneſs, when they

they were encamping by Jordan, before they paſſed it, Deut. xxxi 22. and chap. xxxii. It was forty years betwixt this and their firſt ſong Thus they may have a weary time of it through the wilderneſs, who yet, when they come to the Jordan of death, ſhall be made to ſing there, the ſweeteſt ſong that ever they ſang, like the ſwan ſinging ſweeteſt when a dying. The nearer the rivers come to the ſea, they are the ſooner met by the tide. Motions in nature are ſo much the ſwifter as they come nearer the centre. And it may be a very cloudy day in which the ſun ſhall ſhine brighteſt at its ſetting, Zech. xiv. 6. 7.

4. The Lord is their banner in the wilderneſs, and ſo they may be ſure of victory, they ſhall be conquerors in the war, Exod. xvii. 15. Though they muſt fight, yet Chriſt the true Joſhua is upon their head; he ſits in heaven, who has the balance of victory in his hand; and he is their friend, and the cauſe is his own Nay, they ſhall be more than conquerors. Iſrael was armed with the ſpoils of the Egyptian army, and Sihon and Og's lands they got poſſeſſion of. Though the believer's battle with the world, the devil, and his own corruptions be ſore; yet the ſpoils thereby gained are ſweet, Pſal. lxxiv. 14. They produce ſweet experiences of the Lord's goodneſs, Rom. v. 3. 4. Jacob was a man whoſe life had more trials than any of the Patriarchs; but as true it was, it had more ſignal experiences too.

5. There is healing in the wilderneſs for them, for the wounds got there. There are fiery flying ſerpents to bite the people there, and they cannot miſs the bites of the old ſerpent now and then. But there is the brazen ſerpent to look to and be healed: the ordinance relative thereto, we have, Numb xxi. 8. 9. *And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Make thee a fiery ſerpent, and ſet it upon a pole: and it ſhall come to paſs, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, ſhall live. And Moſes made a ſerpent of braſs, and put it upon a pole; and it came to paſs, that if a ſerpent*

pent had bitten any man, when he beheld the ſerpent of braſs, he lived. This wilderneſs-world is the haunt of the old ſerpent, his prevailing temptations are his bites, the guilt remaining ſtings and galls the conſcience: but Jeſus Chriſt lifted up on the croſs, and on the pole of the goſpel, being looked to by faith, they are healed, Iſ. xlv. 22. So Iſ. xxxiii. *ult. The inhabitant ſhall not ſay, I am ſick: the people that dwell therein ſhall be forgiven their iniquity.* And how often ſoever they be bitten, ſtill the look of faith will be a healing look.

6. *Laſtly*, We muſt not forget the tabernacle in the wilderneſs, which was the comfort of the godly Iſraelites there. There they had their ſtated meetings, and when any thing more than ordinary ailed them in the wilderneſs, they uſed to draw towards the tabernacle. The tabernacle of goſpel-ordinances is the great comfort of the travellers towards Zion. I ſhall only obſerve, that,

(1.) It was the place of meeting, namely, with God. The cloud of glory reſted on it, and thence God ſpake. Goſpel-ordinances are the place of meeting betwixt the Lord and his people in this wilderneſs world, Prov. viii. 34, 35. and therefore they are even the pleaſanteſt things in the wilderneſs.

(2.) It was coarſe without, but rich and fine within. There was the golden candleſtick, the ſhew-bread table, incenſe-altar, ark, &c. All which believers have in Chriſt enjoyed in the ordinances.

(3.) *Laſtly*, It was a moveable and ſlender thing. The tabernacle of goſpel-ordinances is ſo. But where-ever the Iſraelites went in the wilderneſs, they took the tabernacle with them. And the travellers to Zion, go where they will, dare not leave their religion, or their duties behind them. The tabernacle was often removed in the wilderneſs; but where it went, they went: none have a tack of the goſpel; but where-ever it goes, the travellers will go after it, coſt what it will. Coarſe fare and hard lodging with the

the gospel, will be by them preferred to the world's advantages without it. The tabernacle was suited to the wilderness, they had no temple there, that was reserved for the promised land of rest: but in heaven they shall have it, Rev. iii. 12.

I proceed now to the practical improvement of this subject

USE. I. Of information. From what is said we may draw the following inferences.

1. The people of God need not be surprised, that they meet with many hardships and trials in the world, and that it is a strange world to them, John xvi. *ult* While they are in it, they are in a wilderness. How then can they expect other than a wilderness-life? That the desert is to be turned into a paradise, no body expects: why then look we to see the world other than a wilderness, if we mind for heaven? These things are useful,

(1.) To keep believers from sitting down in it, as their dwelling-place, Cant. iv. 8. or resting-place. A smiling world hugs many to death in its embraces: and the ease many find in it so charms the carnal heart, that the promised land is forgot, Matth xvii. 4.

(2.) To quicken their pace out of it, and so *work together for good to them*, Rom. viii 28. As a boisterous wind blowing on the back of the traveller makes him sometimes run, while otherwise he would walk: so afflictions and trials put the believer to his duty, when he would not otherwise apply to it, and wean his heart more from the world, Micah vii. 7. *Therefore I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.*

(3.) To make heaven more desirable, 2 Cor. v. 4. Their tossing they meet with on the sea of this world, makes them long for the shore, Job vii. 2. And as rest is not so sweet to any as to the weary, nor meat as to the hungry: so heaven must be the more sweet in the enjoyment, that the believer has a weary life here.

2. They

2. They have good reason to bear all the hardships of their wilderness-lot patiently, and with Christian fortitude and chearfulness. And that, (1.) Because they will not last, they will be over ere long; they are going up from the wilderness. What inconveniencies are upon the road, the traveller matters not much, because he is not to stay with them. He may wonder indeed how people can dwell in a place to him so unpleasant: but it is but a light thing to him, because he is only a passenger. Indeed it is no wonder that the world's hardships be intolerable to them, who have no other portion but the things of the world: but they cannot be intolerable to the believer, who has a better portion, even one in heaven (2.) Because the heavenly Canaan which the wilderness-road leads to, will make amends for all: *God shall then wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*, Rev. xxi. 4. Though the way be a rugged one, it leads to a paradise. Christ's espoused bride will forget all the wilderness-hardships, when she comes home to the marriage-chamber in the Bridegroom's Father's house. (3.) Their lot is a wise mixture, take it at the worst. There are advantages allowed to balance the hardships, as ye have heard. There is no strait they can be in, in the wilderness, but there is help for it in the provision made for them there. If the wilderness be a weary land, there are statutes that may be songs to them there, *&c.*

3 They are not Israelites indeed, nor espoused to Christ, who are not going up from this world as a wilderness, in heart and affection, in life and conversation. And such may lay their account, that their carcases will fall in the wilderness, and they shall not see Canaan's land. And such are,

(1.) Those whose hearts were never yet loosed from this world, and married to Christ, Matth. xiii. 44. 45.

45. When man fell off from God, he fell to the creature, and his heart was wedded to it as the ſpring of his content and ſatisfaction. All the croſſes in the world will not looſe this knot; only efficacious grace diſcovering Chriſt in his ſurpaſſing glory to the ſinner will do it.

(2.) Thoſe who are walking according to the courſe of this world, Eph. ii. 2. framing their lives by worldly principles, being acted by worldly motives, and acting for worldly ends as their chief deſign. Thus they are conformed to the world, which ſpeaks them natives of the wilderneſs-world, not pilgrims in it. Theſe, however their voice may be Jacob's, their hands are Eſau's: though they pretend to be going heavenward, they are in the way to deſtruction.

The characters of that walk are,

[1.] To do as the moſt do, not regarding how the beſt do; contrary to that plain injunction, Exod xxiii. 2. *Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil.* Thus the world is like a dunghill, where one part corrupts another, men fearleſsly venturing on thoſe courſes and ways, on which they ſee many before them. This is the downright reverſe of going up from the wilderneſs, being a going along with the world, from which the apoſtle dehorts, Rom. xii. 2. *Be not conformed to this world.*

[2.] To make the world one's buſineſs, and religion the by-hand work at beſt; not remembering what our Lord ſays, Matth. vi. 24. *No man can ſerve two maſters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or elſe he will hold to the one, and deſpiſe the other. Ye cannot ſerve God and mammon.* This is the way of the world, who look on their carnal intereſts as their chief intereſts, which therefore get the flower and ſtrength of their affections. Whereas gracious ſouls go quite the contrary way, *counting all things but loſs*, yea *but dung that they may win Chriſt*, Phil. iii. 8. And ſo our Lord directs us,

Matth.

Matth. vi. 33. to *ſeek firſt the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs.*

[3.] To ſtep over conſcience deliberately, to gratify luſts. Conſcience among the men of the world is a very weak thing; and all its dictates, and the conſideration of God's word as our rule, and God's honour as concerned in mens actions, go very ſhort way with them. Let the unjuſt man ſee gain within his reach, and the ſenſual man what may pleaſe his ſenſual luſt: though God's command, honour, and conſcience be between him and them, he can ſtep over theſe, tread on them all, and gratify his luſt, Hoſ xii. 7 8 & xiii 6.

Use II. Of caution. While ye are in the wilderneſs, beware of wilderneſs ſins and ſnares. And beware of,

1. Unbelief. That was a wilderneſs-ſin of Iſrael's, Pſal. lxxviii. 22. *They believed not in God, and truſted not in his ſalvation.* Yea, it was the ſin that kept the whole generation that came out of Egypt, out of Canaan, Heb. iii 18. 19. Many that ſeem to have been ſet fair on the way to the heavenly Canaan, come ſhort of it this way. They believe not the record that God hath given concerning his Son, and ſo they never embrace Chriſt, but periſh. And the unbelief of ſaints while they are in the wilderneſs, does them much harm. It plucks away from their ſtrength, and leaves them moſt unfit for the journey.

2. Murmuring, 1 Cor. x. 10. Many times God's anger was kindled againſt Iſrael for their murmurings in the wilderneſs. And it is incident to us in this wilderneſs-world, through the trials, croſſes, and troubles that muſt be met with there. They had need of mortified affections that travel the wilderneſs-way, elſe they cannot in patience poſſeſs their ſouls. And when people have loſt their patience, and their ſpirits are on the fret, every thing ruffles them, and the hard way becomes harder.

3. Luſting, 1 Cor. x. 6. Let not the looſe be given

given to your hearts, to fix on any thing which providence ſees meet to with-hold from you, ſo that ye muſt have it, and cannot be ſatisfied without it. Thus the Iſraelites luſted for fleſh, and they got it with a vengeance, Numb. xi. Pſal. lxxviii. 30. 31. And it is ordinary that what people pull off the tree of providence before it be ripe for them, ſets their teeth on edge, and proves a ſnare to them. There is nothing better than a weaned heart to fit one for the wilderneſs-way.

4. Looking back to Egypt, Numb. xiv. 4. There is a root of apoſtaſy in every one's heart, though broken in the ſincere, yet reigning in others: hence it comes to paſs, that many go far back, and loſe what they have attained in religion, making themſelves new work, with difficulty to recover what they threw away: and many fall away for good and all, and never recover. We have much need to take heed to the firſt riſing of theſe evil motions in the heart, Pſal. xlv. 10. *Hearken, O daughter, and conſider, and incline thine ear; forget alſo thine own people, and thy father's houſe.*

5. Fawning and flattering enemies, Numb. xxv. 17. 18. Pharaoh's purſuit with his chariots and horſes, Amalek's ſword and bow, did not the miſchief to Iſrael in the wilderneſs, that the daughters of Moab did, Numb. xxv. Balaam tried all his art to curſe them, but could do them no harm by all his inchantments: but the Midianitiſh women ruined them with theirs, ver. 9. The church of God has often weathered out the ſtorm of perſecution, and come off victorious; while ſhe has been ruined with the ſoft methods of the enemy. And many have ſtood out againſt the frowning world, that have been caſt down with the ſmiling world. They have been drawn to deſtruction with ſilken cords of temptation, who could not be driven to it with iron rods.

6. *Laſtly*, The mixed multitude, Exod. xii. 38. They were a black ſight to Iſrael in the wilderneſs,

a ſad ſnare to them, Numb. xi. 4. They came in among them from a carnal principle of worldly intereſt, and were a ſnare to them, and their carcaſes fell in the wilderneſs. When God brings his church out of the houſe of bondage, and gives her peace, a company of carnal men driving their own worldly intereſt, join them like a ſwarm of inſects in a ſummer-day, (Exod. xii. 38. *a great mixture*, Heb.); and the more their number increaſes, the more miſchief they do to her true intereſts, ſacrificing them to their own. It is not a little owing to the influence of that mixed multitude both of miniſters and profeſſors, that religion and its intereſts are at ſo low an ebb this day: and therefore we have ground to expect a ſtroke, come from what quarter it will, that will make a diſperſion among us, and leſſen our numbers, Ezek. xx. 37. 38. In the mean time beware of thoſe who have a name to live, and are dead: formal profeſſors often hurt a Chriſtian more than the profane.

Use III. Of exhortation. And,

Firſt, Ye who profeſs to be eſpouſed to Chriſt, evidence the reality of it by your going up from the wilderneſs-world with him, in heart and affection, in the progreſs of ſanctification, and contempt of the world, holding off from the ways of it. To preſs this, I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. Without this ye cannot evidence your ſincerity, 1 John ii. 15. If your treaſure be in heaven, your heart will be there. If Chriſt be indeed your eſpouſed Huſband, ye will forſake your father's houſe for him, and follow him. But many give him the hand, and not the heart; and therefore, though called by his name, dwell at their father's houſe ſtill.

2. Without this ye will bring a reproach on religion, which ſuffers extremely by thoſe who profeſs Chriſt, and yet follow the way of the world, Rom. ii. 24. Alas! for the wounds thus given to religion by the worldly diſpoſition of the profeſſors of it, whoſe untender

untender lives, and covetous practices, proclaim them sons of earth.

3. *Lastly*, Ye may be very useful for Christ in the world this way, by commending religion practically at this rate, to the consciences of carnal men. *Who is this that goeth up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?* say the daughters of Jerusalem. What can have more influence upon them, than to see men dead to the world, heavenly in their disposition, walking as pilgrims on the earth? It is a noble testimony for God,

(1.) To the vanity of the world, while men in their practice tread on that which carnal men set their hearts upon. What avails it for a man to talk of the world's vanity, while he is still gripping it as his life, cannot part with it at God's call, for God's honour and service; but, on the contrary, is dishonouring God, and wounding his own soul, to gain it? That is building with the one hand, and destroying with the other.

(2.) To the reality and excellency of religion, and heavenly things, 1 Pet. iv. 4. Cant. iii. 6. It speaks a power in religion that can carry men above these perishing things, and that they must be fed from some other quarter, that so little value the streams of earthly things.

Secondly, Strangers to Christ, be espoused to him, that ye may go up with him from this wilderness-world, to his Father's house in the heavenly Canaan. Believe that Christ is offered in an everlasting marriage-covenant to you. Embrace ye and accept, and so close with him as your Head and Husband, for time and eternity. I offer the following motives to enforce this exhortation.

Mot. 1. Jesus Christ is really and truly in suit of your souls. This is the gospel-offer, Hos. ii. 19. *I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgement, and in loving kindness, and in mercies*; and nothing

will hinder but the want of your consent, Matth. xxii. 4. *All things are ready: come unto the marriage.* He has with his precious blood bought a bride to himself, and he comes in the gospel to gain her heart to himself. And he is come to you this day; O then slight not the offer.

2. If ye accept of Christ, he will carry you up from this wilderness-world to his Father's house, where the marriage will be solemnized for ever. He will leave none of his behind him. There may be a time betwixt the espousals and marriage; but in that time he is carrying them to the marriage-chamber.

3. There is no loosing of the heart from the world without engaging it to Jesus Christ, Matth. xiii. 45. 46. It is the discovery of the one pearl that makes one give over seeking the many. The heart of man is like a child that will not let the knife go out of its hand, till something that pleases it better is put into it. Though the devil go out, if the house be empty, hewill return again, Matth. xii. 44. 45.

4. *Lastly*, If ye are not espoused to Christ, ye will fall in the wilderness, and never see the heavenly Canaan, Heb. iv. 12. They will have no access to the marriage above, that are not espoused to Christ here below. Nor will they be transplanted into the paradise above, who are not first planted in the nursery of grace below.

Thirdly, I invite, and sound an alarm to you all, to go up from this wilderness-world with Christ. Rise, ye that are espoused to him, and come away. Rise, ye dwellers in the wilderness. Take him as your Head and Husband, and go along with him towards the heavenly Canaan, leaving this world in heart and affection.

Quest. How shall I get up from the wilderness-world, how will I get through it to the heavenly Canaan, while the journey is so hard and difficult for a poor weak creature? *Answ.* I give you your directions and advice in a third doctrine from the text.

DOCT.

DOCT. *The way to get up from the wilderness-world to the heavenly Canaan, is to go all along leaning on Jesus Christ by faith.* The way to live well in this world, till we come to heaven, is to live by faith.

Here I shall briefly shew what it is to go leaning, or to live by faith; and that we are allowed to go thus.

I. I shall shew briefly what it is to go leaning, or to live by faith.

1. It supposes, the soul's taking, receiving, and embracing Christ for its Head and Husband, John i. 12. In the gospel Jesus Christ is offered, presented, and exhibited to every one that hears it, as the Father's gift to them, Is. ix. 6. John iv. 10. He says in effect, "Poor souls, ye can never of yourselves make "your way up through the wilderness; but I freely "give you a strong One to lean upon. Take him "and welcome." Hereupon the soul takes its hold of Christ for that end. The soul believes the gospel offer or promise as made to itself, saying in effect, "Then "he is mine by the free offer made to me;" which implies the heart's consent to take him, and so the espousals are made, 1 John v. 11. It bears a going,

2. Cleaving to him, Acts xi. 23. Faith joins the soul to the Lord, so as to be one with him; and so holds the gripe, and will not quit it. The believer hangs by Christ, by the word of the gospel; and as the weak woman dares not lean to her own strength, but cleaves to her husband on the journey, so does the believer to Christ.

3. A going on under a sense of weakness, 2 Cor. iii. 5. There are two causes of one's going leaning upon another. One is love, the other weakness: both concur here. The believer loves Christ as his Lord and Husband, and therefore *will* lean on him: he is sensible of utter weakness and inability to make the journey in his own strength, and therefore *must* lean on him. Faith is a self-emptying grace,

and therefore is chosen to be the mean of communication on our part betwixt the Lord and us, Rom. iv. 16.

4. A going on, laying our weight on the Lord Jesus for the whole of the journey, Psal. lv. 22. When the believer sets out with Christ, he says to him, "All thy wants be on me." "So be it," says the believing soul, and so rolls itself upon him for all. Hence faith is called a *staying*, If. l. 10. as an old man stays himself upon his staff: a *believing on* Christ, as a chief corner-stone, *i. e.* laying the weight on him, as on the foundation, 1 Pet. ii. 6.

5. *Lastly*, A going on, with a persuasion that we shall be borne up and borne through by him, 2 Tim. i. 12. This is the plain import of leaning on Christ; for none will ever lean on that for help, concerning which they have no manner of persuasion that they shall be helped by it. Thus faith is called *trusting in* God, *relying on* him, both which bear this persuasion. And they that would remove this from the nature of faith, would destroy it, and leave us a mere wavering opinion in its stead.

But as one may lean trembling, so faith may be accompanied with doubting. But as trembling belongs not to the nature of leaning, but is opposite to it; so doubting belongs not to the nature of faith, but is opposite to it. And the more trembling the less leaning, so the more doubting the less faith.

This going up from the wilderness leaning, is walking in Christ Jesus as we have received him, Col. ii. 6. which is the only true holiness competent to fallen man.

II. I shall shew, that we are allowed to go thus leaning. Consider, that,

1. The Father has appointed the Mediator for this very end, that so he may bring many sons to glory, Psal. lxxxix. 19. *I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one chosen out of the people.*

The

The first man, with all his children in his loins, set off alone through the world, on his own stock; and fell, being unable to make the journey. Wherefore now the strength for all the heirs of glory is lodged in Christ, and they are allowed to live and lean on him, 1 Cor. i. 30. *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* 2 Tim. ii. 1. *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

2. We are called and commanded to lean on him, Psal. lv. 22. *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.* Prov. iii. 5. 6. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* Psal. xxxvii. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.* Isa. xxvi. 3. 4. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.* It is the great duty called for in the Old and New Testament. We honour the Father and the Son, by doing this through the Spirit.

3. To pretend to go another way, is an abomination to the Lord, Prov. iii. 5. We know no holiness of Adam's fallen children, but what is a walking in Jesus Christ. Men may call the obedience given to the law otherwise, holiness; but a holy God will never own it as such, when it savours not of union with his Son.

Use. Then if ye would go up from the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Canaan, go leaning on Jesus Christ.

1. Go leaning on him for light to know your duty, Prov. iii. 5. Ye are in the wilderness; let him be eyes to you there; look to him, as the Israelites did to the motions of the cloud, for your direction. He is the great

great Prophet and Teacher; close your own eyes, that ye may be guided by his word and Spirit.

2. Go leaning on him for strength to perform your duty, Phil. iv. 13. It will not be your weak hands that will work the work, nor your feeble knees that will perform the journey The strength must come from him who is the Head. And ye must go on on borrowed legs.

3. *Lastly*, Go leaning on him for acceptance, and the happy issue of your journey, Eph. i. 6. It is through him alone that any step we make in the Lord's way can be accepted, and by him alone we can be brought into the eternal rest.

In all this ye are to believe the word of promise, and on the credit of it to set about your duty, renouncing yourselves, and believing and applying the sufficiency treasured up in Christ.

Great is your need of leaning: ye have great work to do, a great journey to go, much weakness hangs about you, much opposition ye must encounter with; yet forward ye must be out of the wilderness to the heavenly Canaan, else ye perish.

Enoch's

Enoch's Character and Tranſlation explained; with a Deſcription of walking with God, as that in which the Life of Religion lies.

Several ſermons preached at Ettrick, in the year 1716.

GENESIS v. 24.

And Enoch walked with God, and he was not: for God took him.

IT is too evident, that the generation we live in is in a declining condition; that profeſſors are few, but real Chriſtians fewer by far. Religion with many is turned to be the object of their ridicule; and among thoſe that own it, to mere dry and ſapleſs notions, for the moſt part. Few now are added to the church, or brought over out of the devil's camp. True godlineſs languiſhes, and ſerious experimental religion wears out. Therefore I would preſs religion in the life and power of it, on thoſe that would ſave themſelves from this untoward generation.

Here ſhines the brighteſt ſtar in the patriarchal age, which having given light to the lower world for a time, was afterwards tranſlated into a higher ſphere, and paſſed out of the world in as unuſual a manner as he lived in it. For as men live in the world, ſo ordinarily they go out of it.

There is a long account here, where nothing is marked but names and numbers, mens living and dying, till we come to Enoch, whoſe ſingular piety is recorded. *Obſerve*, The life of man is for the moſt part a vain thing, of which, by the ſleeping of ſome, and the ſlumbering of others, nothing remains remarkable,

markable, but that they lived and died. But cloſe walking with God ſerves another and better purpoſe, than to cauſe one juſt fill up room in the world for a while.

From the ſhort hiſtory of theſe antediluvian patriarchs, we may learn one leſſon, that will ſerve us all our days, *viz.* That we muſt die, how long ſoever we live. It is reported of one, that by hearing this chapter read in the church, he got ſuch an impreſſion of his own death, that he turned religious, that he might die well. *Drexel. de ætern.*

But from the hiſtory of Enoch we may learn two leſſons. 1. How to live well in this world. 2. The happineſs that abides thoſe in another world, who ſo live here; even eternal happineſs of ſoul and body with the Lord.

In the words there is remarked a real preaching that was given to the old world by Enoch: a life-preaching; for his converſation preached to them, what religion was, and what was their great duty, *viz.* walking with God: a removal-preaching, (we cannot ſay his death preached, for he did not die; but his paſſage out of the world preached), that there is another and a better life with God in another world, both for ſoul and body. And this is no doubt marked, to ſhew us the mercy beſtowed on that generation, that the godly in it might be encouraged, and the wicked left without excuſe, while ſuch a bright ſtar ſhone ſo fair in that dark age. For it is obſervable, that his walking with God is twice told, once ver. 22. and here again in the text, in conjunction with his happy removal, giving us a compendious body of divinity, written for the uſe of that age eſpecially, (not excluding others), in this man's life and tranſlation out of the world. So that God left not himſelf without a witneſs in that degenerate age. They not only heard, but ſaw in him, the power of godlineſs, and the reward of it too.

Obſerve, Men will not only have the inſtructions and

and warnings they get from the word, but those they get from the examples of holy men, to answer for in the day of accounts. There are silent preachers, who yet speak home, as *Noah*, who *being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world*, Heb. xi. 7.; and the men of Nineveh, and the queen of the south, of whom our Lord says, Matth. xii. 41. 42. *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here.* Examples of a holy life, if they do not lead spectators to heaven, will drive them more deep into destruction.

Though it is charitably thought, that all these patriarchs were good men, yet surely the age wherein Enoch lived was a very degenerate and profane age. Methuselah his son died the same year the deluge came on. He lived 969 years. Enoch walked with God 300 years. So from his translation there were but 669 to the deluge. Of that they got 120 years warning of the deluge; so that to that time there were but 549 years. There were none of those here mentioned but they lived more than 700 years. And God's Spirit had been long striving with the generation before the last 120 years. So that we may well reckon that many of those who lived in Enoch's days, were of those God's Spirit had so long striven with, and that were swept away by the deluge: and consequently that it was a very degenerate and profane age he lived in, wherein men had come the length to talk and act boldly against the God that made them, as appears from Jude 14. 15. *Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord*

Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgement upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Observe, Be the times never so bad, it is mens own fault they are bad too. Eminent holiness, and intimate communion with God, may be attained in the worst of times. While that generation was running to ruin, Enoch walked with God.

The reasons are,

1. Because however men grow worse and worse, Heaven is still as good and bountiful as ever, Is. lix. 1. 2. *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save: neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.* God's door still stands open, though the generation conspire to trouble it very little for supply. Our Lord will never shut his door upon his people, because they are few; but it shall stand open as long as there is one that has business in his house, Micah ii 7. *O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?*

2. Because those that mind for heaven, must row against the stream always; and if they do not, they will be carried down the stream in the best of times: for, says our Lord, Matth. xi. 12. *from the days of John the Baptist, until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* If people will ply the throne of grace, and resolutely set themselves against the epidemical disease of their day, they may keep lively in the midst of a dead crew, though with much difficulty, as our Lord observes, Rev. iii. 4. *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments.*

3. The badness of the times affords matter to excite

cite God's people the more to their duty, and close walking with God. The profaneness and formality of those they live among, and the dishonour done to God thereby, should be like oil to the flame of their holy love and zeal, as it was to David, Psal. cxix. 126. 127. *It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.* The prospect of what must needs be the issue of such apostasy of a generation may also quicken them; even as one is the more concerned to see to his own safety, that the rest of the family are pulling down the house about their own ears; as was the case with Noah, who, among a very wicked and abandoned people, had this character, *Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God,* Gen. vi. 9.

4. *Lastly,* Because as the Lord shews himself most concerned for the welfare of those, who are most concerned for his honour; so the worse the times are, they that cleave to him closely may expect to fare the better, as Noah also did, when the Lord said to him, *Come thou, and all thy house into the ark: for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation,* Gen. vii. 1. Moses never had a more glorious manifestation of God, than at that time when the Israelites had fallen into the idolatry of the golden calf, and God was about to destroy the whole nation; as you will find by comparing Exod. xxxii. 10. and chap. xxxiii. & xxxiv.

Use. 1. Learn that those who keep not up communion with God, in the life and power of religion, in evil times, are in God's account joined and embarked with the generation of his wrath; and be who they will, they will smart with the rest for it, though they put not forth their hands to the notorious abominations of the times they live in. Hence is that threatening, Zeph. i. 12. *It shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles,*

and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil. It is a heavy word that sets formal hypocrites and profane wretches on one and the same bottom, Psal. cxxv. *ult. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.*

2. Bad example with its influence will not excuse people before the Lord. While it is no comfort to go to hell with company, there can be no safety in following a multitude to do evil. What! will men think that because the conspiracy against God and holiness is strong, therefore they may join in it; that because serious godliness is going over the brae, therefore they may give it a push? But wo will be to them that give an unhallowed touch to God's wain when it is at the halting.

3. To be complaining of the evil of the times, sighing and going backward in religion, is a fruitless unavailing complaint, neither pleasing to God, nor profitable to one's self. For at no time does religion consist in talking, but walking with God. And that is but to condemn ourselves out of our own mouths.

4. *Lastly*, Let us be exhorted to study the power and reality of religion in these dregs of time. Let us draw the nearer to God, that we see so many going far from him. And as we would not bring the wrath of God on ourselves, let us neither join with a profane generation, nor continue on our lees with a formal dead-hearted generation, strangers to the power of godliness. Consider here,

1. Enoch's holy life in this world.

2. His happy removal into a better world.

FIRST, Let us consider Enoch's holy life in this world; *Enoch walked with God.* The Spirit of God puts a special remark on this. It is Enoch's honour, that he did not walk as others did, after their lusts. Yea, he walked more holily and closely with God, than other good men of that age.

Observ.

Observ. 1. God takes special notice of those who are best when others are worst, Gen. vi. 9. We see this in the instance of Noah in the old world, and of Lot in Sodom; likewise of those mentioned Ezek. ix. 4. concerning whom the Lord said, *Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof*; and those taken notice of Mal. iii. 16 17. *Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*

1. To be thus argues an ingenuous spirit, a love to the Lord for himself, and a love to his way for its likeness to himself; that the soul is carried thus to it against the stream of the corruption of the age.

2. It argues not only grace, but the strength of grace. It must be strong faith, love, *&c.* that so much bear out against the strong temptation to apostasy, arising from the combination of a generation against God and his way. To be holy when the helps to a holy life are least in the world, argues the vigour of grace in the heart.

Use. Labour ye then to be best while others are worst, to confront the impiety of the generation wherein ye live. Do they indulge themselves in licentiousness? be ye the more strict and holy in your walk. Do they take up with mere externals in religion? strive ye the rather to get into the inner court, to taste and see, and there to have communion with God.

Obs. 2. It is the honour of a professor of religion, to outgo others in the matter of close walking with God. God himself is glorious in holiness. The more holy one is, the more like is he to God. The liker he is to God, the more honourable is he.

Use. 1. This lets us see what would be a blessed emulation among professors, *viz.* that we were striving who should be most tender, holy, and circumspect. O that that were brought in, in the room of all our strifes and contests about practices and opinions, which eat out the life of religion in our day! But alas! real holiness is little regarded, and therefore little striven for.

2. It must be a Godless-like mark in any person, to have the serpentine grudge rise in their breasts against others, as they see them eminent for holy and tender walking. These are the persons most beloved and honoured of God; and it looks deviliish-like to hate them, and have one's heart rise against them, for that very reason for which God loves them.

In the first part of the words we have,

1. The person characterized; and that is *Enoch.* There was another of this name descended from Cain, who had a city called after his name, Gen. iv. 17. Immortality is desired of all; and because men cannot shave off death, they follow after a shadow of immortality, that at least their name may live when they are gone. Therefore that has been an ancient custom, for men to call their lands after their own names, Psal. xlix. 11. How much better was it with this Enoch, that took that course to get on him the name of the city of God, which Christ promises to write on all his people, Rev. iii. 12.? The city called by the name of the other Enoch was destroyed by the deluge, and is now unknown; but the city of God lasts still, and will last for ever.

Obs. True piety is the best way to honour, even to true honour. For *the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance*, when *the memory of the wicked shall rot.*

Enoch signifies *dedicated, initiated, instructed.* His life answered his name, for he lived as one devoted to the Lord. *Obs.* It is the duty of those devoted to God by their godly parents, to devote themselves to the Lord. And where grace comes in with good education,

education, it ordinarily makes men famous in their generation, and signally serviceable to God.

He was the seventh from Adam, and a prophet, who foretold the last judgement, even in that early age of the church, Jude 14. above cited. He was like Noah, a preacher of righteousness in his day; and like John Baptist, a burning and shining light, burning in his conversation, shining in his doctrine.

Obs. They that live near God, are most likely to be put upon his secrets, and to know most of his mind: Psal. xxv. 14. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.*

2. His character: He *walked with God.* He lived like a man of another world; a life of close communion with God. It imports, (1.) That he was really religious; not only religious before men, but before God. *Obs.* Religion lies inwardly. We are that really which we are before the Lord, Rom. ii. *ult.* *He is a Jew, which is one inwardly.* (2.) He was eminently religious. *Obs.* Men may attain to eminency in religion, in very bad times, by setting the Lord always before them. See here,

1st, What he was; a spiritual traveller through the world: He *walked.* Whereas it is said of others, They *lived*; it is said of Enoch, He *walked with God.* He looked on himself as a pilgrim and stranger in this present world, Heb. xi. 13. compare ver. 5. and did not sit down in it to take up his abode on this side Jordan.

Obs. They that would live a life of communion with God, must live as pilgrims in this world, as travellers through it to a better country.

1. Their hearts must be loosed from the world, bidding an eternal farewell to it as a portion, 1 John ii. 15. The heart gone from God naturally sits down on the creature, to suck the sap of it, and to pursue it as its chief good. Now, the first step to the soul's thriving, is to lift the heart from the creature, and once fairly to give up with the vain world.

2. They must be fixed on the better country, Heb. xi. 14. They must look to the land that is afar off, resolutely aiming to be there, and therefore habitually keeping it in their eye, as the mark they desire to hit, Phil. iii. 20. Thus we shall be heavenly in the frame and disposition of our spirits.

3. They must keep death much in their view, the passage out of this world into the other, Job xiv. 14. *If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.* See what a familiarity he had contracted with it, chap. xvii. 14 *I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister.* This is the way to wean our hearts from the world, and to stir us up to converse much with another world

4. *Lastly*, They must beware of dipping deep in things of this life, but go through the world lightly, like travellers, who serve themselves with a passing view of the se parts they go through: 1 Cor vii 29. 30. 31 *But this I say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away*

The reason is, because the world is one of the great make-bates betwixt God and a soul. And so far as it gets in betwixt God and us, it causes an eclipse of the light of the Lord's countenance.

Use As ever ye would live a life of communion with God, live as pilgrims in this world. The manna never fell from heaven in the wilderness, till the provision brought from Egypt was spent and done. Deny yourselves to this world, if ye would have the taste of things of a better world. When the vessels of your hearts are emptied of the love of the world, the oil of grace will run.

2*dly*, The company he kept while he was in the way:

way: He *walked with God.* He did not walk with the generation he lived in; did not go with the multitude, thinking it enough to do as they did: but he *walked with God*, being a follower of the Lord, keeping his eye on him.

Obs. True religion makes one give up with the way of the world, and set God before them for all. It is the way of strangers from God to follow the course of this world, Eph. ii. 2. They that mind for heaven, must be nonconformists to the world, Rom. xii. 2. They must be practical separatists from the world, in life and conversation, Phil. xii. 7. as it was with Joshua, who said, chap. xxiv. 15. *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

Use. 1. See here what a graceless-like thing it is for people to content themselves to be like neighbour and other. Ah, Sirs, though all the world should approve you, if God condemn you, what will it avail? They that pin their faith or holiness on other people's sleeve, have neither faith nor holiness, and will never see heaven.

2 See the necessity of a religion beyond the reach of the common gang of the world, Zech. iii. 8. Ye must not satisfy yourselves with the religion that most part do; but press forward to leave them behind you, because they do not walk with God.

3dly, His constancy in the way of the Lord: He *walked incessantly*, as the word signifies. He did not take his religion by fits and starts, as many do, but he kept a constant course of it Ver. 22. tells us, he walked with God three hundred years, all the time he lived after he begat Methuselah. Though perhaps he was a good man while he lived single in his young days; yet his last days were his best days. His greatest eminency for piety was in the days of his married life; while his family was increasing, his soul was increasing too.

Obs. A married state is a state of life very consistent with the soul's flourishing in religion.

Use. How

Uſe. How unreaſonable then is that excuſe, which goes mighty far with the world, Luke xiv. 20. *I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come?* It was not ſo with Enoch; the comforts of it did not ſo bewitch him, nor the cares of it ſo rack his ſpirit, but that he was one of the holieſt and heavenlieſt men that ever lived. What a pity is it, that that ſtate ſhould be a ſtate of declining in religion to ſo many, and that as their family increaſes, their ſoul's caſe goes to wreck? So that of their marriage-day it may be ſaid, as John vi. 66. *From that time many of his diſciples went back, and walked no more with him.* It is a holy ſtate, and a helpful one, by God's appointment. It muſt needs be a dreadful buſineſs, where the one proves a ſnare to the other, for apoſtaſy from the life of God.

SECONDLY, There is Enoch's happy removal into a better world.

1. Conſider his leaving of this world: *He was not*, no more in this world. Of all the reſt it is ſaid, they *died;* but of him only, *he was not*, for he died not, but got out of the world without dying. He was taken off,

1*ſt*, Soon, being only 365 years of age. That was in the midſt of his days; for there were none of the patriarchs before the flood, but they lived more than as long again.

Obſ. God oft-times takes them ſooneſt out of the world that are deareſt to him. Why then ſhould we be fond of long life? He was a man that was dear to God, and uſeful for God. And if he did not live long, he lived faſt, and did more in his few days, than others in double the time. He had no loſs, for the remainder of his days he got in heaven.

2*dly*, Suddenly; ſo the phraſe ſeems to import, Pſal. xxxvii. 36. and ſo the nature of the thing requires it to be; as in the caſe of Elijah, 2 Kings ii. 11. and thoſe who ſhall be changed, 1 Cor. xv. 51. 52. caſes parallel to this. He evaniſhed.

Obſ. A

Obs. A sudden removal out of the world may befal the best of God's children. Why should the Lord's people then be afraid of sudden death? It does but make sore work short work; and they that are in Christ can never be taken habitually at least unprepared; and they that always walk habitually with God, are always actually prepared. Good old Eli died such a death.

2. Consider his transportation to heaven: *God took him;* took him home, took him up soul and body at once to himself into heaven, Heb. xi. 5. God made a change on his corruptible body without death, even such a change as will be made on the bodies of the saints that shall be alive at Christ's second coming. So there was as great a difference betwixt his removal and that of others, as betwixt his life and theirs.

Obs. When the saints leave the world, God takes them home to himself.

All the patriarchs mentioned in this chapter were alive at Enoch's translation, except Adam, who died some time before, and Noah, who was born some time after. Adam himself had heard the voice of God, and Noah got an eminent confirmation of his faith in his preservation in the ark. Enoch's translation might be confirming to the rest, in the faith of a future happy state of the saints, both in soul and body. And it was a sure pledge of the resurrection, that was then very far off, and not yet come.

Obs. The weight of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which God so early confirmed. It is worthy to be remarked, how Enoch's body was carried to heaven before the law, Elijah's under the law, and Christ's under the gospel. So that each of the three great periods of the world's age, had in it a notable pledge of the resurrection of the body.

Use. Let us then live and die in the faith of it; and while we live, live as those that look for it.

Having

Having thus given a large practical explication of the text, I proceed to observe a point of doctrine from them, as the ground of some further discourse.

DOCT. *The life of religion lies in walking with God*; or, *The great thing we should aim at for practical godliness, is to walk with God.*

Here I shall,

I. Explain this walking with God.

II. Confirm the doctrine, That the life of religion lies in walking with God.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. For explication of this walking with God, I shall consider it,

1. In the foundation thereof, with respect to our state.

2. In the matter of it, in respect of our frame and conversation.

3. In the properties thereof.

FIRST, I am to consider walking with God in the foundation thereof, with respect to our state. And so it presupposes,

First, Spiritual life restored to the soul in regeneration. Men are naturally dead to God and holiness, Eph. ii. 1. *dead in trespasses and sins.* A dead man cannot walk, and a dead soul cannot walk with God. Before Lazarus once in the grave could move again, he behoved to be quickened and raised again. No wonder that many cannot walk with God, seeing they are strangers to the life of God. They live as they were born in a natural state. Consider,

1. The eye of the understanding is out, and man naturally is blind, Eph. v. 8. Walking with God is a regular walk; how then can the blind soul walk so? To walk at random is to walk contrary to God, Lev. xxvi. 21 *Heb.* Never a soul will stumble on the way of God; for while in the state of blindness, Satan and

and lusts lead the soul. Therefore we must be cured by divine illumination; and for this cause the gospel is preached, Acts xxvi. 18. *to open mens eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light*

2. The feet of the soul, the will and affections, are quite indisposed for walking with God, and they must be cured. Hence is the promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 27. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgements, and do them.*

(1.) They are distorted, disjointed, and cannot ply to the way of God: Jer. xiii. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.* They have got a set to backsliding from the Lord, and they cannot be cured without a miracle of grace. That must give them a new set, or we are undone for ever, Psal. lxxxv. *ult. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.*

(2.) They are weak, and unable to bear us in his way, Rom v. 6. We lost our strength in the loins of our first parents, and never recover it till we be in Christ, to partake of his Spirit. If the soul aim to rise, it cannot; if to walk, the legs fail under us. Nay,

(3.) They are powerless, John xv. 5. & vi. 44. There is power in them to carry us still further out of God's way, but they are absolutely unable to move heavenward, till they be endowed with power from on high. Therefore we are to be concerned for the new nature, the principle of spiritual life.

Secondly, Faith in God through Jesus Christ. We must come to God before we can walk with him, and it is by faith we come to him, Heb. xi. 6. We are naturally at a distance from God: in the everlasting covenant God offers to meet us in Christ. So by coming to Christ we meet with God, that we may

may ſet off in our way with him. Whoſo would walk with God,

1. Muſt take God for their God in the covenant, Heb. viii. 10. renouncing all others for him, and accepting him as their God and portion, to walk with him as their covenanted God. The world bears great bulk in ſinners eyes naturally, but we muſt look over it and above it, to the God that made it, that we may take up our ſouls everlaſting reſt in him. So did Enoch, while the reſt were following vanities; he cloſed his eyes on them, and came to God as his ſoul's home.

2. They muſt embrace Chriſt in the offer of the goſpel, ſeeing in him only we can meet with God. God out of Chriſt is a conſuming fire; but vailed with the fleſh of Chriſt, he is a refreſhing ſun. We cannot walk with an abſolute God, more than dry fewel can lie before a conſuming fire.

Thirdly, A ſtate of reconciliation with God, Amos iii. 3. *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* Man naturally is in a ſtate of enmity with God. And while that laſts, he can never walk with God dutifully to him, nor comfortably to himſelf. For in that ſtate what we do can never be acceptable to God, nor can we look for comfort to ourſelves by it: and hence Eliphaz adviſes, Job xxii. 21. *Acquaint now thyſelf with him, and be at peace: thereby good ſhall come unto thee.* Therefore we muſt be in a juſtified ſtate, having our ſins pardoned for the ſake of Chriſt, and ſo in a ſtate of peace through the great Peacemaker. When God and a ſinner in a ſtate of enmity meet, what can be expected but,

1. Angry looks? No wonder he turn his back on ſuch; ſo that though they come to Jeruſalem, they ſee not the King's face: Hoſ. v. 6. *They ſhall go—to ſeek the Lord: but they ſhall not find him, he hath withdrawn himſelf from them.*

2. Angry words? God can ſpeak ſo as to make the conſcience hear, where there is no audible voice,

Pſal.

Pſal. l. 16. *But unto the wicked God ſaith, What haſt thou to do to declare my ſtatutes, or that thou ſhouldſt take my covenant in thy mouth?* That is a queſtion that imports anger, upbraiding, accuſing, and grief for the contempt put upon him. And O what a ſad matter is it to have him angry with us in whoſe favour life lies; him to upbraid us, who does us all the good we get; him our accuſer, who is our only interceſſor; and him to be grieved with us, who only can make us glad?

3. Angry ſtrokes? When enemies meet, no wonder there be blows a-dealing. Sometimes there are ſtrokes on the body, 1 Cor. x. 1.—6. ſtrokes on the ſoul, Mal. i. *ult.* See how it was with the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, Pſal. cvi. 15. *He gave them their requeſt, but ſent leanneſs into their ſoul.* Wherefore let us labour to have God for our friend in Chriſt, that we may walk with him.

Fourthly, Converſion, or turning to God. We are naturally turned away from God, and therefore are called to return to him, Hoſ. xiv. 1. Our hearts are turned away from himſelf; our feet are turned away from his way. We muſt turn back again ere we can walk with him.

1. Our hearts muſt be brought off the world to God, Cant. iv. 8. *Come with me from Lebanon, my ſpouſe, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions dens, from the mountains of the leopards.* The firſt removing of the heart was from God to the creature, from the fountain to the muddy ſtreams and broken ciſterns, Jer. ii. 13. There men naturally ſeek their happineſs, comfort, and ſatisfaction. But it muſt remove again, leave the bulky vanity, the fair deceitful nothing, and return to God. Our hearts muſt be lifted, our love, joy, delight, *&c.* off the creature, and ſet on God.

2. Our hearts muſt be brought from our luſts to the Lord, from our ſins to our Saviour: we muſt ſay,

That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more, Job xxxiv. 32. That day the soul returns to the Lord, the idols will be cast to the bats and to the moles, Is. ii. 20. For if God get the throne in the heart, they will get the cross. It was in this case God observed Ephraim, and was well pleased with him, Jer. xxxi. 18. 19. 20. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.*

3. We must be brought out of ourselves unto God, Matth. xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.* Man turning off from God turned into himself, and made himself his chief end, acting from himself and to himself. So we are naturally hemmed in within the cursed circle of self, out of which we must be turned ere we can walk with God. And,

(1.) Out of our self-wisdom, put in the room of Christ as a Prophet. For thus saith God to all that would walk with him, *I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye,* Psal. xxxii. 8. Whoso would give up themselves to the Lord, must as it were put out their own eyes, resolving never more to guide themselves, that they may follow the Lord, as Abraham did, Heb. xi. 8. who, at God's call, *went out, not knowing whither he went.*

(2.) Out of our self-righteousness, put in the room of Christ as a Priest. We must come up to duties, and

and then come over them, renouncing all confidence in them, laying no weight on them in the point of commending us to the favour of God. For what ſtreſs is laid on them that way, derogates from the honour of him on whom the Father has laid help, and is inconſiſtent with the character of the true circumciſion, Phil. iii. 3. Otherwiſe we cannot walk with God in duties.

(3.) Out of our ſelf-will and ſelf-ability, put in the room of Chriſt as a King. Man is naturally wilful, and will have his own liking, and do what ſeems good in his own eyes. But in the day that one comes to walk with God, he gives up with his own will, ſaying, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.* He gives it to be led as a captive after Chriſt's chariot-wheels, ſo that he may draw it and drive over it, as ſeems good in his eyes, 2 Cor. x. 5.

Man alſo naturally goes into himſelf for ſtrength wherewith to do commanded duty, being ignorant of Chriſt as the head of influences for ſanctification. But in the day one comes to walk with God, he renounces his own ſtock as inſufficient, and gives up himſelf to live by Chriſt, in the way of being daily ſupplied, John vi. 57. For then he ſees the truth of that ſaying, *He that truſteth in his own heart, is a fool: but whoſo walketh wiſely, he ſhall be delivered,* Prov. xxviii. 26.

SECONDLY, I ſhall conſider walking with God in the matter of it, in reſpect of our frame and converſation. And indeed this duty goes as broad as the whole law. I muſt take it up in ſome particulars. If we would have the life of religion in our walk, we muſt not walk at random.

FIRST, We muſt walk with God in the way of habitual eying of him in all things. It is the neck-break of many, that God is not in all their thoughts, and the ruin of religion among profeſſors, that they forget God, though he is not far from any of us. The heart is like a common inn, ſo thronged with ſtran-

gers, that the maſter is not noticed, but thruſt out to make room for others. It was otherwiſe with David, Pſal. xvi. 8. *I have ſet the Lord always before me: becauſe he is at my right hand, I ſhall not be moved.*

1. We muſt eye him as our witneſs in all things. Let us ſay every where as Hagar, Gen. xvi. 13. *Thou God ſeeſt me.* Let us fix on our hearts awful apprehenſions of his omniſcience and omnipreſence, as Pſal. cxxxix. 7. *Whither ſhall I go from thy Spirit? or whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence?* There is a root of Atheiſm in our hearts that ſays, *The Lord hath forſaken the earth, and the Lord ſeeth not*, Ezek. ix. 9. And O how ready are the beſt to forget, though they are ever under the chalk of his eye, that he is a witneſs to every thought, word, and action! Thus walking with God implies,

(1.) The believing of his all-ſeeing eye, embracing it with a firm faith, that he is intimately acquainted with all our ways, Heb. iv. 13. His eye is on us where no other eye can ſee us, yea where our own eyes cannot reach, that is, into our hearts. And where the true faith of this is, it will not want an impreſſion of proportionable depth with the ſtrength of the faith wherewith it is apprehended.

(2.) An habitual minding of this all-ſeeing eye that is on us, Pſal. xvi. 8. Walkers with God are frequently ſiſting themſelves in the preſence of this God; and eſpecially when the temptation comes, they look to him that ſees them, and ſay, *Shall I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?*

(3.) A ſuitable reſpect to this all-ſeeing eye, influencing our hearts, lips, and lives, to beware of ſin, and to be diligent and upright in duty. The eyes of a child will reſtrain people ſometimes; how much more ſhould the eye of God, that is never off us?

2. Eye him as our Judge, to whom at length we muſt give an account, Rom. xiv. 10. Let us remember, and often have in our mind, that word which at length will reach our ears, *Riſe ye dead, and come*

to

to judgement. We might walk as we list, if we were never to be called to account. But there is not a thought, word, or action, but what must be judged, Rom. ii. 16. Eccl. xii. *ult.* We can never say there is more than a step betwixt us and the judgement-seat, and therefore there is good reason we should walk as prisoners going to the bar.

(1.) Let us walk as under the eye of an infinitely-holy Judge, who cannot look on sin but with abhorrence, Hab. i. 13. He can never be brought by any means to approve of sin, how little soever we think of it. The least spot is offensive to the eyes of his jealousy, and he cannot away with it.

(2.) Let us walk as under the eye of an accurate Judge, from whom no crime can be hid, whose eyes no pretences nor fair colours can deceive. Let us remember when we come there, our crimes cannot be hid for want of evidence; for the omniscient Judge himself is witness to all, and that omniscience will pierce through all the vails wherewith we now cloke our sins.

(3.) Let us walk as under the eye of an impartial Judge. He is one that cannot be biassed either by feud or favour. He is no respecter of persons, but rewards every one according to his work. The belief of this would make us impartial in our own cause; and if we were walking with God, we would sift our own cause without partiality.

3. Eye him as our Redeemer and Saviour, Is. xlv. 22. *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.* To eye God as our witness and judge, without eying him as a God in Christ, atoned by his blood, would fright us away from him, so as we could never walk with him more. But that a guilty creature may walk with God, let him,

(1.) Eye the mercy of God in a Mediator, Is. lv. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the*

Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. That is a large covering under which may be hid all the guilt of our walk. It reaches deep and extends very far, Pſal. lxxxvi. 13. *Great is thy mercy toward me: and thou haſt delivered my ſoul from the loweſt hell.* In our moſt accurate walking, and when we have done our utmoſt, there will be need of grace and mercy. And we muſt believingly apply to it, that when we have fallen, we may riſe up again and walk.

(2.) Eye the righteouſneſs of a Redeemer. Had the moſt cloſe walker with God nothing to look to but the righteouſneſs of his own works, he would never have ground of joy all the way through the wilderneſs. But the naughtineſs of his own righteouſneſs makes him look often to the imputed righteouſneſs, and there he joys, Iſ. xlv. 24. 25. *Surely, ſhall one ſay, In the Lord have I righteouſneſs and ſtrength.—In the Lord ſhall all the ſeed of Iſrael be juſtified, and ſhall glory.*

(3.) Eye the conſcience-purging blood, Heb xii. 22. 24. If thou haſt come up into Chriſt's chariot of the covenant, the covering of it is a covert of purple, that is ever over thy head. When conſcience is wounded with guilt, it is like a thorn got into the foot of the traveller, who can walk no more till it be drawn out, Heb. ix. 14.

4. Eye him as the fountain of ſtrength, Iſ. xlv. 24. forecited. This was the way that David reſolved to walk with God, Pſal. lxxi. 16 *I will go in the ſtrength of the Lord God.* The way we have to go is difficult, we have little ſtrength, and there is much oppoſition; we need to keep our eye on him in whom the believer's ſtrength lies, Pſal. lxxxiv. 5. None walk with God but thoſe that draw ſtrength from him, for the whole of their walk. And that lies in two things.

(1.) Believing the promiſe of ſtrength and furniture, for whatever piece of the way we are called to go through, Pſal. cxvi. 9. 10. *I will walk before the Lord*

Lord in the land of the living. I believed, therefore have I spoken. The spiritual traveller has many a difficult step in his way to Immanuel's land, but in the covenant there is strength promised to carry him through them all. He must keep his eye on the promise, and firmly believe it, for that is the way to suck the breasts of these consolations.

(2.) Using the means on the credit of the promise. God's institutions have promises annexed to them, and they become effectual, being thus believingly used, Heb. iv. 2. compare John xvii. 17. To pretend to believe without using of means, is presumption; to use the means without believing the promise, is lifeless formality. Is there a lust to mortify, or a temptation to resist? let us use the means, and believe the promise of sanctification with close application to ourselves.

5. Eye him as our Master, Lord, Head, and Husband, Psal. xlv. 11. *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him.* See how the spouse comes out of the wilderness walking with God, even *leaning on* him as her Head and Husband, Cant. viii. 5. We must walk with him, as obedient servants with a master, dutiful subjects with a king, *&c.* Whomsoever others serve, let it be our resolution to serve the Lord, Josh. xxiv. 15. And this imports, that we must be ready,

(1.) To receive his orders, and the least indications of his mind to comply with them, signified to us by his word or providence. How closely did the psalmist thus walk with God? Psal. cxxiii. 2. *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress: so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us.* And this is the duty of all pretending to be espoused to Christ. So that it must needs be great untenderness, that *God speaks once, yea twice, yet men regard it not.*

(2.) To do his bidding; *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* said Paul, Acts ix. 6. Our Lord lets

lets us see, that it is not talking of, but thus walking with God, that is religion indeed, Luke vi. 46. *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* And it is not the hearers, but the doers of the word that shall be justified. There is no walking with God, if we walk not in the road of obedience to his commands. If we take our own way, we walk not with him, but Satan.

(3.) To be careful to please him in all things, 1 Cor. vii. 34. to give content to the heart of Christ in whatever we do, Col. i. 10. not only to do the thing he commands, but to do it to his mind, so as he may take pleasure in us, and delight to do us good. For thus the duty of Christ's spouse in walking with God is summed up, Psal. xlv. 10. *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.*

6. *Lastly*, Eye him as our chief end. As he that walks with God sets off in his way in him and by him, so he walks to him as the great end of his walk, Psal. xvi. 8. *I have set the Lord always before me.* Rom. xi. *ult. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.* This implies two things.

(1.) Aiming at his glory in all things, 1 Cor. x. 31. We must make that the great scope of all our actions, and of our whole life. He that walks with God displaces self, which is the dead sea into which all our actions naturally run, and sets up the honour of God instead thereof; reckoning his life no more useful in the world than it tends to the honour of God. For we are as trees in a vineyard, of no use, but as they bring forth fruit to the master's use, Luke xiii. 7.

(2.) Seeking to enjoy him as our chief happiness, Psal. lxxiii. 25. Man can never be self-sufficient, (no not angels); that is the peculiar prerogative of God, whose perfections are infinite. So he must needs seek his happiness without himself. While he is without God in a natural state, he seeks it in the creatures;

creatures; when he comes to God, he takes God for it. And walking with God, he habitually seeks it in the enjoyment of him, and feeds at that table he sits down to in conversion. And so if ye would walk with God,

1.) Ye must seek to enjoy him in all things, in the measure he is to be enjoyed here, Psal. xxvii. 4.; seek to enjoy him in ordinances, Psal. lxiii. 1. 2. public, private, and secret. Ye must not stay in the shell, nor in the outer court; but seek to believe, taste, and feel, Psal. xxxiv. 8. Ye must seek him in providences, Psal. xciv. 4. merciful and favourable, smiling and frowning. He will be the sap and foison of mercies to the walker with God, Gen. xxxiii. 10. and they will see his name in cross dispensations, Micah vi. 9.

2.) Ye must seek to enjoy him in heaven hereafter. If ye walk through the world with God, ye will walk as pilgrims bound for another and better country, keeping that in your view as your only rest, Heb. xi. 13. 16. He that walks with God, walks as one living, that he may die well, making it the business of this life to learn to die, and to get beyond it to a better life.

Secondly, We must walk with God in the way of the heart's going along with him in all things, as the shadow goes with the body. Hence it is called *walking after the Lord*, Hos. xi. 10. *following the Lord*, Numb. xiv. 24. Walking with God is no bodily motion, but a spiritual motion, a moving of the heart and affections; and so it must import necessarily the heart's going along with him. I will take it up in these three things. If ye would walk with God, your hearts must go along with him,

1. In the way of believing in all things. Thus Enoch walked with God, Heb. xi. 5. God is a Spirit, and our souls are spirits. The way of communion betwixt God and us is in the way of believing; for we cannot know him to our salvation, but as he has revealed himself to us in his word. So God manifesting

manifesting himself by his word, we cannot walk with him, but as our hearts go along with these manifestations of himself, in the way of believing; hence is that account the apostle gives us of his walk, Gal. ii. 20. *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* So walking with God imports,

(1.) Believing of his commands. Faith discerns the stamp of divine authority on the commands, and so gives them a suitable weight on one's own spirit. It esteems and judges them all right and reasonable, Psal. cxix. 128. So they are believed to be not only from God, but suited to the divine perfections, and to man's real welfare. Which cannot miss to influence the person to obedience.

(2.) Believing of his promises, the promises of the gospel, Heb. xi. 13. He that walks with God, does not only believe the great leading promises of the covenant, of God himself's being their God, and of eternal salvation, but the lesser promises depending on these. And while others take other things for their heritage, they take the promises for theirs, Psal. cxix. 111. So the great thing that sways them in their course of life, is the prospect of unseen things, (2 Cor. iv. 18.) to be had in another world, and likewise the prospect of what is promised even in this life.

So the promises are apt to influence obedience; and when they do, that is walking with God; when one ventures on, and follows the way of duty on the credit of the promise: *e. g.* giving out of their substance at God's call, upon the faith of the promise, Prov. iii. 9. 10. *&c.*

(3.) Believing of his threatenings, Heb. xi. 7. We find holy men have thus walked with God, being influenced to a tender holy walk by the faith of God's threatenings in his word, Job xxxii. *ult.* David was not of a servile legal spirit, when he says, Psal. cxix. 120. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgements.* Hence they that walk with

with God, will not venture on an ill thing, more than they would take fire into their bosom, because the terror of God makes them afraid of sin.

2. In the way of compliance with his holy will. If we do not thus in all things, we walk contrary to him. When man fell off from God, his own will became his law, and was set in opposition to the will of God. When he returns to God, his will is inclined by grace to God's will; and walking with God it goes along therewith, complying with it in all things. So walking with God imports,

(1.) Complying with the will of his command in all things, Acts ix. 6. The heart of the believer is reconciled to, and approves of the law as holy, just, and good; and while he walks with God, he labours sincerely to suit his walk thereunto in all things, being grieved at any reluctancy that is in his heart against any piece of obedience, crying with David, Psal. cxix. 5. *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*

(2.) Complying with the will of his providence, the heart being reconciled to that lot which God is pleased to carve out, Psal. xlvii. 4. O what walking contrary to God is there in this respect, while the proud unhumbled heart will not, cannot accommodate itself to divine dispensations! but murmurs, frets, and repines, and rebels against the Lord, as the sovereign Governor of the world.

3. In the way of habitual moving of the heart towards him. Grace has an attractive virtue in the heart drawing it towards God. And when it is in exercise, it will make the heart to be moving towards him, whereas otherwise it settles on other things besides him. So in walking with God there is,

(1.) Frequent thinking and meditating on him, Mal. iii. 16. That is a black character of the wicked, Psal. x. 4. *God is not in all his thoughts.* And the saint is in a backgoing condition that begins to forget him, Jer. ii. 32. Yea, fleeting thoughts are not

not sufficient; if we walk with God, he will be the subject of our meditation, both occasional and stated, Psal. lxiii. 6. If we walk with a man, he is ever in our view, and so we cannot miss to think on him.

(2.) Habitual moving of the heart towards him, in love, desire, trust, *&c.* He is the chief good and the best of beings, which should ever command our love, Deut. vi. 5. That is the holy fire that is kept glowing and flaming in the heart of one that walks with God; loving him for himself, and for his goodness to us. Desires after him are the breathings of a soul touched with the love of God, tending to perfect enjoyment. And the continual wants and weakness that such a one finds himself compassed with, turn him very naturally to trust and dependence on him.

(3.) Frequent use of ejaculatory prayer, 1 Thess. v. 17. This is that kind of prayer to which we have access at all times, the darting up of a desire to the Lord, whatever be the lawful business we are about, or whatever be our case. And hardly can people be thought to walk with God, that are not frequently sending these swift, though silent messengers to heaven. We find Jacob, in the midst of his testament, using such a devout ejaculation, Gen. xlix 18. *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.* See Moses's practice, Exod. xiv. 15. and Nehemiah's, before he answered a king, Neh. ii. 4.

THIRDLY, We must walk with God in ordinances, Luke i. 6. submitting to, and seeking communion with God in all ordinances as we have access. The ordinances are the banqueting-house of Christ, wherein he feasts his people, Cant. ii. 4. the galleries wherein the King is held by those that walk with him there, Cant. vii. 5. Particularly communion with God is to be sought and kept up,

1. In secret prayer, Matth. vi. 6. We must walk with God in a due and ordinary observance of that kind of prayer. It is a duty wherein the people of God

God have had as much communion with God as in any other; witneſs Jacob's experience, Gen. xxxii. 24. and Daniel's, chap ix. 22. The Lord promiſes his people a particular familiarity with him in that duty, Cant. vii. 11. *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field: let us lodge in the villages.* And however ſome may be blithe to get it ſhifted, yet the truly-exerciſed would find it hard, nay they could not at all live without it. And how people can walk with God, taking it only now and then, and not making conſcience of ordinary obſerving of it, I ſee not. And indeed people will readily know by their diſpoſition in ſecret prayer, whether they be in a thriving caſe or not.

2. In family-prayer, Acts x. 2. 3. Never one that gives Chriſt heart-room, but they will be willing to give him houſe-room too. And there are none that walk with God themſelves, but they would fain all their family walked with God too, Joſh. xxiv. 15. And there are none who have gone about it ſeriouſly, but muſt ſay, that family-worſhip is an ordinance in which God is to be found. Prayerleſs families are in a dangerous condition; they are as if the owners ſhould uncover the roofs of them, that wrath may be ſhowered down on them, Jer. x. *ult. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name.* And I think if people were walking with God in family-duties, they would not lay by the morning-exerciſe, as many of you do. And what is it that hinders it? What but the weary world? ye cannot get time for it, becauſe of your buſineſs. But are not ye afraid of God's curſe on that buſineſs that ſhuts out his worſhip? And if it ſhould thrive, ye take the way to get leanneſs to your ſouls. It looks not like walking with God to ſtand off from family-worſhip, till they have no other thing ado, and it is a graceleſs-like thing to offer only that time to God that coſts you nothing.

3. In reading of the word, John v. 39. We find

the truly-godly have been great lovers of the Bible. O how does David commend it, especially in the 119th psalm, though it was but a small part of it that was written in his time! One that would walk with God, should even walk through the Bible, reading it, and acquainting themselves with the mind of God in it. And ye will see, that whenever persons come to be in earnest exercised about their case, they will very naturally go to their Bibles in quite another manner than they used to do.

4. In extraordinary prayer, setting time apart for it, either in secret, or in families; of which I have spoke before *.

5. In hearing of the word. Whenever the Lord puts an occasion of hearing the word in your hand, he says in effect, Come walk with me in the galleries; and *with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation*, Is. xii. 3. And every believing soul will reply with David, Psal. lxv. 4. *Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.* The Sabbath-day is a day of blessing, the preaching of the gospel is the great means for the salvation of sinners, 1 Cor. i. 21. Is it not then a slighting of communion with God, for people to idle away so many Sabbaths at home, in making so little conscience of attending on public ordinances? Read through the whole Bible, and ye will not find a gracious person, but was much addicted to the place where his honour dwells, to public ordinances. And I assure you, the godly in some places would wonder if they could have any good in them at all, that can contentedly sit at home, when they are neither sick nor sore, nor have any providential necessity put upon them. It is very observable, Numb. ix. 10.—13. "that if any man of Israel, or of their posterity should

* See Memorial concerning personal and family fasting, annexed to the author's View of the covenant of grace.

be

be unclean by reaſon of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he ſhould keep the paſſover unto the Lord :—but the man that was clean, and was not in a journey, and forbore to keep the paſſover ; even the ſame ſoul ſhould be cut off from his people, becauſe he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed ſeaſon." Whence obſerve, that as thoſe who againſt their wills are forced to be abſent from God's ordinances, may expect the favours of his grace under their affliction ; ſo thoſe who of choice abſent themſelves, may expect the tokens of his wrath for their ſin.

6. *Laſtly*, In the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper. That is an ordinance eſpecially appointed for communion with God, 1 Cor. x. 16. And it has been ſo in the experience of many ſouls. Wherefore it muſt be ſtrange how thoſe can walk with God, that never ſet their foot on that holy ground, though they have one opportunity after another.

And if ye would walk with God in theſe duties, (1.) Ye muſt make conſcience of preparation, even prepare for ſecret prayer, *&c.* (2.) Seek and preſs forward for communion with God in theſe ordinances, and take not up with the external work. (3) Do not take them by ſtarts, but keep an ordinary, as ye have occaſion, otherwiſe ye cannot be ſaid to walk with God in them.

FOURTHLY, We muſt walk with God in providences. Theſe are his ways wherein he walks towards us, and we muſt walk with him in them, Hoſ. xiv. *ult. Who is wiſe, and he ſhall underſtand theſe things ? prudent, and he ſhall know them ? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the juſt ſhall walk in them.* Sometimes he goes with us in the way of ſmiling, ſometimes of croſs providences : but whether he take the high road of lifting up, or the low one of downcaſting, we are to follow, and walk with him. This lies in theſe ſeven things.

1. We muſt notice his hand in all that we meet

with from any hand whatsoever. God guides the world by wisdom, and without him second causes cannot move, Ezek. i. 20. Whether thou meet with a mercy or a cross, say in thine heart, This is the finger of God, Gen. xxxiii. 10. The not noticing of this is a spice of Atheism, that God is highly displeased with, Psal xxviii. 5. *Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.* See how the Pagan Chaldeans do with smiling providences, Hab. i. 16. *They sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag: because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.* And see what the Philistines say of their afflictions, *It is a chance.* But he that walketh with God, takes all out of the Lord's hand.

2. We must accommodate ourselves to the aspect of providence, whether it be shining or louring, Eccl. vii. 14. For without this we shew a contempt of providence, which the Lord takes hainously, as you may see by looking to Is. xxii. 12. 13. 14. We must rejoice in his mercies, and walk soberly and concernedly under the strokes of his hand.

3. We must labour to find out the design of providence. Providence has a voice, and it is a voice of speech which may be understood, Ezek. i. 24. The works of providence are a book which the walker with God labours to read the mind of God in. Merciful dispensations are preachers of repentance, and happy are they that hear their voice, Rom. ii. 4. Cross dispensations have a language to the same purpose, Micah vi. 9. *The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

To help you to know the particular design of providence in cross dispensations that ye meet with,

(1.) Pray in faith for it, believing that God will discover it to you in the use of means, in his own time, Job x. 2. *Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.* Compare Matth. xxi. 22. *All things whatsoever*

ſoever ye ſhall aſk in prayer, believing, ye ſhall receive. But take good heed that your ſouls be truly and honeſtly laid open to divine inſtruction, that you be diſpoſed to know it at any rate, though it ſhould touch you in a moſt ſenſible part: Pſal. xxv. 9. *The meek will he guide in judgement: and the meek will he teach his way.*

(2.) Search for it, as the Iſraelites did for the accurſed thing, Pſal. lxxvii. 6. Think upon it, in order to find it out. Take a view of your way, what it was before and at the time when ye met with the croſs; even as when men have loſt any thing, they go back till they come to the place where they are ſure they had it.

(3.) Take help of the word in this matter. Conſider ſcripture-threatenings, or examples, that may be appoſite to your caſe. All that you or I meet with is but a fulfilling of the ſcripture, Hoſ. vii. 12. And as providence gives light to the word, ſo the word gives light to providence. And thus Moſes opened up the meaning of a dark providence to Aaron from the word, Lev. x. 3. *This is it that the Lord ſpake, ſaying, I will be ſanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.*

(4.) Liſten to the whiſpers of conſcience under the rod. The ſin that under the rod conſcience caſts moſt in thy teeth, is very likely to be the ſin that God is aiming at, as in the caſe of Joſeph's brethren, Gen. xlii. 21. who *ſaid one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we ſaw the anguiſh of his ſoul, when he beſought us; and we would not hear: therefore is this diſtreſs come upon us.* Even as the man that has a ſore finger, whatever touches his hand, the finger ſmarts; an evidence that there his ſore lies.

(5.) Conſider what ſin it is that thou haſt had moſt reproofs for from the word, moſt checks for by ſome leſſer ſteps of providence, moſt challenges for from

conſcience, and yet thou haſt not reformed. That is likely to be it. For God's rods follow his rebukes, as Abſalom did with Joab: Jer xxii. 21 22. *I ſpake unto thee in thy proſperity, but thou ſaidſt, I will not hear: this hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedſt not my voice. The wind ſhall eat up all thy paſtures, and thy lovers ſhall go into captivity, ſurely then ſhalt thou be aſhamed and confounded for all thy wickedneſs.*

(6.) *Laſtly*, Conſider the nature of the ſtroke or croſs, for very readily there is a diſcernible affinity betwixt the ſin and the ſtroke. Sometimes God puniſhes men in the ſame kind with their ſin, as in the caſe of Adonibezek, Judg. i 7. Sometimes in the occaſion of their ſin, as Eli's indulgence to his children was puniſhed by the death of them. Sometimes their puniſhment is in what is moſt contrary to their ſin, as David's ſin in numbering of the people. Sometimes God meaſures to us in temporals, as we do to him in ſpirituals, Hoſ. iv. 12. 13. 1 Cor. xi. 30. and ſeveral other ways.

One that walks with God will have ſo much ado with theſe things, that they ſhould very carefully obſerve them, for daily practice of taking up God's mind in what they meet with.

4. We muſt endeavour to comply with the deſigns of providence, Job xxxvi. 10. 11. Providences in favourable diſpenſations are God's cords of love and bands of a man, whereby he draws ſinners to himſelf. In afflicting diſpenſations they are God's furnace for melting of ſouls, that they may take on ſuitable impreſſions. And O but it is ſad when the effect of all is that, Hoſ. xi. 2. *As they called them, ſo they went from them.* Jer. vi. 29. 30. *The bellows are burnt, the lead is conſumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate ſilver ſhall men call them, becauſe the Lord hath rejected them.* That is a grievous complaint, Jer. v. 3. *Thou haſt ſtricken them, but they have not grieved: thou*

thou haſt conſumed them, but they have refuſed to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refuſed to return. But he that walketh with God makes it his buſineſs to comply with the diſpenſations of providence in the deſign of them, to ſerve the Lord more chearfully that God is kind to him, and to bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs under afflictions.

5. We muſt notice the harmony of providences with the word, Pſal xlviii 8. *As we have heard, ſo have we ſeen in the city of the Lord of hoſts.* This is the way to get communion with God in providences. And a ſweet feaſt they often afford to thoſe that are thus exerciſed to diſcern them; hence ſays David, Pſal. xcii. 4. *Thou, Lord, haſt made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands;* and ſaid Jacob to his brother Eſau, Gen. xxxiii. 10. *Therefore I have ſeen thy face, as though I had ſeen the face of God, and thou waſt pleaſed with me.* The word is the ſcheme and draught of the government of the world; and the lines of providence are all drawn accordingly. So that whatſoever thou meeteſt with, it is an accompliſhment of ſcripture promiſes, threatenings, or doctrines. And a child of God in applying them thus to the rule, may have ſweet communion with God.

6. We muſt follow the conduct of providence in ſubſerviency to the word, keeping our eye on the promiſe, Pſal. xxxii. 8. *I will inſtruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou ſhalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.* To ſeparate providence from the word, and then make it a rule, is dangerous, Jonah i. 3. But to follow the conduct of it with an eye to the word, is a notable part of the Chriſtian's walking with God. Providence is the hand of the Lord whereby he opens the way in the wilderneſs to his people, that they may follow him. And go where they will, as long as they can thus keep their eye on their guide, they may judge themſelves in the ſafeſt way.

7. *Laſtly,*

7. *Laſtly*, We muſt live in the exerciſe of the graces ſuitable to the diſpenſations of providence wherewith we are tryſted, Eccl. vii. 14. Some diſpenſations are ſweet and comfortable; let us by them be ſtirred up to love the Lord the more, Pſal. cxvi. 1. Let any comfort that we find in the creature be uſed to enlarge our hearts in thankfulneſs to, deſire of, and chearfulneſs in ſerving the Lord. Some are heavy, and require patience; ſome dark and doubtful, and require faith. Some take away our created ſupports, dry up our ciſterns, and put out our candle; and ſuch require truſt in the Lord, and to rejoice in him, Hab. iii 17. 18. Thus he that walks with God, follows him whitherſoever he goes.

FIFTHLY, We muſt walk with God in the ſtations and relations wherein he hath placed us. Theſe are the ſphere that God hath given us to move in, in the world And whoſo walks not with God in them, will never pleaſe him. There are two pieces of work which a Chriſtian has to do.

1. One for himſelf, and that is his ſalvation-work, Phil. ii. 12. That is, to ſecure his eternal welfare in the enjoyment of God, and ſo to make ſure his gracious ſtate to maintain a gracious frame and diſpoſition, by getting incident controverſies betwixt God and his ſoul done away, grace actuated, ſtrengthened, and nouriſhed, till he come to the ſtature of a perfect man in Chriſt. This lies in his perſonal walk.

2. One for God, and that is his generation-work, Acts xiii. 36. This lies in his relative walk. Whence we may conclude, that ſo far as a man or woman is defective in their relative duties, ſo far they are uſeleſs for God, and take up room in the world for no purpoſe. And ſo far as they do ill inſtead of good in their relations, they walk contrary to God. We ſee how the Lord in the works of nature has jointed together the creatures, the ſun to ſhine by day, and the moon by night, the beaſts to ſerve man, and the earth with the products thereof to ſerve both. The

beauty

beauty of the world lies in every one's keeping their place, and being ſerviceable in the place wherein God has ſet them. And ſo relations are the joints of ſociety; and they that would walk with God, muſt walk with him in them.

(1.) We muſt labour faithfully to diſcharge the duties of our ſtations and relations, as under the eye of God, who is our common Overſeer, Witneſs, and Judge, Pſal. ci. 2. God has ſhaped out our work to us, whether in the church, commonwealth, or family, wherein ſome are as eyes, ſome as hands, and ſome as feet. Though the work of others may be higher and more honourable than ours, our greateſt honour will be to approve ourſelves to God in our own part. God obſerves how every one does his duty, the huſband, the wife, the maſter, the ſervant. And they that walk with God, will behave themſelves in theſe things as under the eye of God, as well as when they are at prayers, *&c.* Col. iii. 22.

(2.) We muſt do the duties of our relations under a ſenſe of the command of God. It is not enough that the huſband love his wife, or the wife ſubmit herſelf to her huſband, *&c.* if conſcience of duty towards God do not ſway them thereto, Eph. v. 21. We muſt make God our great party in all theſe things, otherwiſe we do not walk with God in them. There is no relation one ſtands in, but God has ſet them their duty; and ſo the performance of theſe duties is as much the trial of our obedience, as the moſt religious actions we are capable of.

(3.) We muſt do the duties of our relations with an eye to the real good of our relatives. *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf*, is the ſum of the ſecond table. No man is born for himſelf, but to be ſerviceable to God and his fellow-creatures, Rom. xv. 2. And the more uſeful we are to others, the more we ſerve God, and the more we are like him: for he does good unto all, even to the unholy and unthankful.

(4.) *Laſtly*, We muſt do the duties of our relations with

with an eye to the honour of God, 1 Cor. x. 31. O the dishonour that is done to God by the little conscience that is made of relative duties, by crying relative sins. Should the fabric of the world run into confusion, sun, moon, stars, day and night, go out of their courses, where were the honour of God arising from the beauty of an orderly management of the world? But ah! how often are the foundations in churches, states, and families out of course, and there nothing but disorder and confusion, contention and opposition, every one going out of their course; and so the honour of God, and their own good and comfort lying buried in the ruinous heap? This is walking contrary to God.

This walking with God is particularly noticed concerning Enoch, Gen. v. 22. *And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.* He walked with God in his family, as a father and a husband, in a married state. So if thou be a walker with God, it will appear in the relations wherein thou standest; for grace makes a good husband, a good wife, a good master, a good servant, *&c.* And the duties of relations will readily try both the reality and strength of grace.

Sixthly, We must walk with God in all our actions, whether natural, civil, or religious, 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* Religion is to our conversation like salt to meat, necessary to season our whole life, whatever it is that we are about.

First, We must walk with God in our natural actions, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, *&c.* These are common to us with the beasts; but we must not be like the beasts in the use of them, but walk with God therein. Now, if we would walk with God in these things,

1. We must do them under a sense of the command of God. Eating and drinking, *&c.* are duties of

of the sixth command; and therefore we ought to do them because God has said, *Thou shalt not kill.* Where-ever there is a divine ordinance respecting any natural action, we ought therein to have respect to that ordinance, 1 Tim. iv. 4. 5. *For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.* Our bodies are the Lord's, and he binds us by all lawful means to preserve them; and then do men walk with God in these things, while they patch up the mud-wall house under the sense of the command of the Owner.

2. We must depend on the Lord for benefit by them, 1 Tim. iv. 5. Without the blessing on the means, the end cannot be obtained. Without God our meat cannot nourish us, nor our cloaths warm us; so that the emptiness of the creature points us to God at every turn, agreeable to what our Lord says, Matth. iv. 4. *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* It is no less than spiritual idolatry to overlook the Lord, and look for the benefit from the creature itself, Jer. xvii. 5. Hos. iv. 10. If he would say the word, we might eat and not be filled, sleep and not be refreshed. So that even in these we are called to walk by faith with God, looking for the benefit of God's ordinance and appointment about these things.

3. We must use them for God and his service; as the traveller takes his staff in his hand, not to be a burden or a carriage to him, but to help him on his journey. While the soul is in the body, it has a mighty dependence thereon; and so it is as the horse that must be cared for, to the end we may accomplish the journey, 2 Kings iii. 15. So walking with God in these things, would make us use them so, as may most fit us for the work of our Christian calling, having that as our great scope before our eye.

4. We must keep a holy Christian moderation in these things, Phil. iv. 5. We must be like Gideon's lappers,

lappers, even when waters of a full cup are set before us. People may easily fall into a sinful eagerness in these things, Gen. xxv. 30. and sink their hearts into these things, wherein they should only lightly go along with wariness, Luke xxi. 34. regulating ourselves in the use of them, by what is best to fit us for our salvation and generation work, which is the true rule of moderation. For the heart must not sit down on them as its end and rest; but pass through them as a means and way, 1 Cor. vii. 29. 30 31.

5. We must ascend by the creature unto the Creator, from creature-sweetness to that infinite fulness that is in God, Zech. ix. *ult. How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.* Seeing all perfection in the creature is originally from God, it must be in him, and that infinitely. If there be any thing desirable in the streams, it must be more so in the fountain. If the light of the sun be so pleasant to the eyes, he who is light itself must be infinitely more so. Whatever pleasure or delight we find in meat, drink, *&c.* it points us to God, from whom that sweetness is derived, as drops from the ocean.

6 We must look on them as covenant mercies, and the fulfilment of promises, Deut. xxvi. 3. *&c.* God has secured our necessary comforts by promise, Is. xxxiii. 16. *Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.* Psal. cxxvii. 2. & lxxxiv. 11. So when we receive them, we should look on them as such; and then however coarse the meat be, being served up in the dish, not of common providence, but of the covenant, it will have an uncommon sweetness, and we will have communion with God in that which others find no more in than beasts do.

7. *Lastly*, We must be thankful for all our mercies, unto God as the giver of them, 1 Thess. v. 18. We must pay to him verbal acknowledgements, Hos. xiv. 2. Deut. viii. 10. and real acknowledgements, serving

ſerving him in the ſtrength of our mercies, and that chearfully, as he deals graciouſly with us in theſe things. What we have from him muſt be uſed for him, Rom. xi. *ult.*; and the more liberally he deals with us, the more chearfully ought we to ſerve him, Deut. xxviii. 47. 48.

Secondly, We muſt walk with God in our civil actions, ſuch as are competent to men in ſociety, as trading, buying, ſelling, working, and in a word, managing our worldly buſineſs: that as we may not act like beaſts in the former, ſo we may not act as men that know not God in the latter. Now, if we would walk with God in managing of our temporal affairs,

1. We muſt act in theſe matters as under a ſenſe of a command or appointment of God in them. God has given each his calling, ſtation, and work; and we are to act therein ſuitably in obedience to him, 1 Cor. vii. 24. doing our proper buſineſs as to the Lord, who is our great Maſter, Eph. vi. 7. Thus a man ſhould go about his worldly buſineſs, whether for his own or another's advantage, becauſe God has ſaid, *Thou ſhalt not ſteal*; looking on it as a piece of his duty to God.

2. We muſt depend on him by faith, for direction in our buſineſs, Prov. iii. 6. We muſt pray for it, and truſt God for it. Temporal affairs are not excepted, Phil. iv. 6. *In every thing by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known unto God.* Whence is a dexterity and ſkill to manage a temporal buſineſs, to do a piece of work to purpoſe without or within doors? Is it not from the Lord? Jam. i. 17. *Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above.* Iſ. xxviii. 26. *For his God doth inſtruct him to diſcretion, and doth teach him.* Common influences of the Spirit are as neceſſary to the exerciſe of a gift, as ſaving influences are to the exerciſe of grace. Remember the error the princes of Iſrael fell into, Joſh. ix. 14. *The men took*

of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord; and Lot's unhappy choice, wherein he did not own God, Gen. xiii. 11. 12.

3. We must depend on the Lord by faith, for the success of our lawful endeavours, Psal. cxxvii. 1. Whatever men undertake with an eye to God in it, they may depend on him for the success of it, Psal. i. 3. An unsanctified confidence of success God often blasts, that he may let all men see in every thing, that *by strength no man shall prevail*, 1 Sam. ii. 9. and that *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*, Eccl. ix. 11. And while people torment themselves with anxiety as to events, he brings their fears oft-times on them, and lets them see, that by taking thought no man can add a cubit to his stature.

4. We must cut and carve in them as may be most for the honour of God and our souls welfare. This is the great mark that we would always keep in view, and according to which we must steer our course. Our eternal interest is our greatest, and all other interests must vail to it. The honour of God is the sheaf to which all other must bow; and the balance is to be cast on that side always on which these are, Matth. xvi. 26. *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Where is the gain where the foot is lost to save the shoe? The world, with whom gain is godliness, and a penny more or less determines them in their affairs, would have thought Moses a foolish man for missing a good bargain, Heb. xi. 24. But he acted even as wisely, as a man who cares not for gaining of that pound, in gaining which he must lose a talent. Therefore consider in your worldly affairs, what will be best for your souls.

5. We must deal with men as under the eye of God, a holy jealous God, whether we be masters, servants, neighbours, *&c.* Eph. v. 15. Be strict and precise observers of common justice, according to the golden

golden rule, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.* Whatever occasions you have to do an unjust thing, let the eye of God be a sufficient restraint, Job xxxi. 21.—23. Let men pretend to what strictness they will otherwise, while they are not strict in their morals this way, they do more ill to religion, than perhaps they will ever be capable to do good.

6. We must observe Christian moderation in these things, 1 Cor. vii. 29. 30. Do not give yourselves wholly to them, to relish nothing but what savours of them, as those of Sodom did, Luke xvii. 28. Let them not steal away your heart, and justle out religion, like those mentioned Luke xiv. 16. *&c.* but remember still you have greater business in hand than that; and therefore dip no farther into them, than you may do with safety to your souls case.

7. *Lastly*, We must be suitably affected with the providence of God in these things; ascribing the success of our affairs to the Lord, and giving him thanks for blessing the work of our hands; acknowledging disappointments and crosses in them to come from the same hand; taking them kindly as trials wherewith the Lord sees meet to exercise us, and labouring to know and comply with the design of them.

Thirdly, We must walk with God in our religious actions, and so distinguish ourselves from hypocrites, who do the things, pray, hear, *&c.* but do not walk with God in them. Now, if we would walk with God in religious duties,

1. We must do our duty out of respect to the command of God, Psal. cxix. 4. We must say in this case, as Simon did in another, Luke v. 5. *At thy word I will let down the net.* When people are led to duties from a custom, or some such low principles or motives, they do not walk with God in them. He that walks with God in them, discerns the stamp of divine authority on every duty, and that awes his heart into a compliance therewith.

2. We must seek the honour of God in all we do, John viii. 50. And indeed if we be let into a view of his glory in duties, the advancing of it will be our great aim. If thou be in duty with others, let God himself be your scope, and take heed of parting the glory betwixt him and thyself. If thou be alone, seek to give him the glory of all his perfections, by acknowledging of, and carrying as under the impression of, the same.

3. We must go about our duty in his own strength, Zech. x. *ult.* Psal. lxxi. 16. renouncing all confidence in ourselves, 2 Cor. iii. 5. No gifts are to be trusted to in this, for they may soon be blasted, and no bare gift can make one act graciously. Nay, habitual grace is not to be trusted to for that end; for the fire not blown cannot give us light. Actual grace needs still to be preserved and fed, else it will fail. Therefore we must lean on the Lord himself for it, Is. xlv. 24. And we must stretch out the withered hand in duty, in hopes of influences from him, and set to sea in confidence of the blowings of the Spirit.

4. We must be spiritual in our duties, John iv. 24. Phil. iii. 3. One that walks with God will not take up with bodily exercise, or lip-labour; but endeavour after inward worship, which is the work of the heart. This lies in loving, fearing, trusting, desiring, humbling of the heart before him; believing his word, *&c.* And so he will reckon no more to be done in worship of God, than what is done with the heart.

5. We must seek to enjoy God in duties, and not be satisfied without it, Psal. xxvii. 4. When thou comest to the galleries, let thine aim be to see the King in his glory. And let not the empty chair of state satisfy thy soul; for nothing is sufficient for the soul, but the enjoyment of God himself, Psal lxxiii. 25. And if this be thine aim, thou wilt pursue it, and thrust forward till thou come even to his seat.

6. We must carry in duties as under the eye of God,

God, in a special manner, Psal. lxxxix. 7. *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.* That looseness of heart, whereby it wanders here and there at duty, proceeds from the want of a due fear of God upon the soul; and is most contrary to walking with God: Jer. xii. 2. *Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.* The fixing of the heart under the impressions of his awful presence, that so the soul may carry suitably before him, is to sanctify the Lord in our heart, Lev. x. 3.

7. We must be frequent in duties, 1 Thess. v. 17. They that walk with God are frequent in solemn duties; but in the interval of these they will be taken up with others of a less solemn nature, such as thinking, meditation on God, ejaculations, *&c.* And thus they will be readily kept in tune for the return of the more solemn duties. And indeed people then cease to walk with God, when they begin to be more remiss and infrequent in solemn duties, and to be less careful of the frame of their hearts in the interval.

8. We must let new occurrences send us to our duty. This has been the practice of walkers with God, that whatever they have met with remarkable, it sent them to God; and *therefore*, says the prophet, *I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me*, Micah vii. 7. And where can a gracious heart have such a vent, as before the Lord, whatever it be full of, whether joy or grief?

9. *Lastly*, We must observe the fruit of our duties, Psal. v. 3. carefully notice what speed we come in our applications to the throne; and what effect God's speaking from his throne has upon us. This is communion with God, to be sending word to, and receiving word from heaven; to be importing something thither in duties and the exercise of grace, and to be exporting something thence for the spiritual enriching of the soul.

THIRDLY, I shall consider walking with God in the properties thereof. Walking with God is religion; and it is,

1. Practical religion, religion in deed, not in word only; and there is no other sort of religion that will bring us to heaven; hence says our Lord, John xiii. 17. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* Talk as we will, if we do not walk with God, we are naught. Jacob dissembling with his father was the lively emblem of a hypocrite, the voice Jacob's, the hands Esau's. There is a great difference betwixt saying and doing in religion. The former is easy, the latter is difficult.

(1.) One may talk well of God and the things of God, and yet have nothing of the truth of religion. He may have a clear head in matters of religion, that has a dark heart; he may have a ready tongue to speak of them, whose feet are shackled with divers lusts, that he cannot walk in the way he speaks of, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. How many are ready in the history of the Bible, that are strangers to the mystery of practical godliness? It is said of Cleopatra queen of Egypt, that people were chained to her rather by the ear than by the eyes. So many, if ye hear them speak, they are something; but if ye look to their life, they are naught.

(2.) One may talk well for God, and yet have nothing of the truth of religion. But though they talk for him, they walk contrary to him. A man may preach for God, and teach others the way, that yet he never sets his foot on himself, Matth. xxiii. 4. Being like a boatman that ferries others over the water, but still with his own back towards the shore. Both ministers and professors may contend zealously for the faith of doctrine, while they are utter strangers to the life of faith; like a physician prescribing remedies to others, while himself is dying of his disease, without applying of proper remedies.

(3.) One may talk well to God, that yet never walks

walks with him. Many ſpeak fair to the Lord, whoſe walk is ever foul, never cleanſed; as in Iſrael's caſe, Deut. v. 27. 29. Fair profeſſions, reſolutions, promiſes, are often ſeen going up as duſt. Look to their words, they are like Naphthali giving goodly words, but ſtill as Rachel, though beautiful yet barren, Matth. vii. 21 *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

But religion being a practical thing, let no man think he has begun to be religious, till he come to practice, Jam. ii. 16. 17.—*Faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone.*

2. It is inward and heart religion, 1 Pet. iii. 4. They that have no religion but what is viſible to the world, have no true religion; for God is the inviſible God, and walking with him muſt be ſo too, Rom. ii. 28. 29. *He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumciſion, which is outward in the fleſh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumciſion is that of the heart, in the ſpirit, and not in the letter, whoſe praiſe is not of men, but of God.* It may be very hard to make any difference betwixt the life of a hypocrite and a ſincere perſon: when the thread of hypocriſy is fine ſpun, it may paſs the ſkill of the beſt diſcerner to diſcover it. And therefore one that walks with God, has a view beyond what he can ſee in others, or others can ſee in him. Ye muſt diſtinguiſh betwixt two things in religion.

(1.) The ſhell of it; and that is all you can ſee of my religion, or I of yours. This ſhell is religious bodily exerciſe, preaching, praying, works of piety, juſtice, mercy, and charity, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Theſe things are not very frequent in the world; but at the great day many of them will be found like deaf nuts, which being cracked and their inſide diſcovered, are caſt into the fire.

(2.) The kernel of it; and that is what none can ſee but God and their own conſciences that have it; and

and that is soul-exercise, heart-work, 1 Tim. iv. 7. Acts xxiv. 16. That only is godliness, and not the other. Preaching and praying, though it were with tears and the greatest seeming seriousness, is not godliness: it is the faith, fear, love, humiliation of heart, hatred of sin, resignation to the will of God, and conformity of the heart to his mind, which is in the preaching or prayer, that is religion in God's account. It is not the works of piety, *&c.* themselves, but the love to God for his own sake, and love to our neighbour for his, the holiness of the principle, manner, motives, ends, that is in these works, that is religion. The bodily exercise is but the vehicle, in which these sacred drops are taken.

Let no man deceive himself. No kernel grows without a shell, and none can have the power of godliness without the form of it: but there is many a shell without a kernel, and much form where there is nothing of the power.

3. It is heavenly religion, Phil. iii. 20. According to mens state and their nature, so will their actions be; for as is the tree, so will the fruit be. The heart of man, according as grace or corruption reigns in it, will tincture every thing that comes through it. Hence a natural man's very religion is carnal and earthly, Jam iii. 15. His best things in religion smell of the earth. If a gale blow at any time on his soul, it rises low; if he sorrow for sin, it is the sorrow of the world; if he offer fire, it is strange fire. On the other hand, religion tinctures the very natural actions of one that walks with God; for this is a walking as one of another world.

Walking with God is indeed walking like one of the other world, namely, the upper world The man conforms no more to the way of this world, Rom. xii. 2. keeps no more its course, Eph. ii. 2 but is coming through it as a pilgrim, and coming out of it, Cant. iv. 8. And,

(1.) His root in this lower world is loosed, that he

he may be in due time tranſplanted into the upper world. The believer is no more one of the *world's own*, John xv. 19. There is a certain ſweetneſs to a man in his native ſoil; and ſo there is to natural men in the world, they are rooted in it by the greedy gripe their hearts take of it, Pſal. xvii. 14. But when grace comes, that gripe is looſed, and fixes on heaven; and ſo that ſweetneſs goes off, and the world turns the weary land to him, Iſ xxxii. 2. They do not find that ſweet in it which others find, and which they themſelves ſometimes found in it. Their hearts are on the way-gate.

(2.) The other world is the main thing he has in view, 2 Cor. iv. 18. While the preſent world bears moſt bulk in the eyes of others, the world to come bears moſt bulk in the eyes of thoſe that walk with God. That is their deſigned and deſired reſt, that ſways them in the courſe of their life; their deſires, hopes, and endeavours centre there. They overlook, and put on a holy regardleſſneſs both of the good and ill of the preſent world, if by any means they may eſcape the ill of the world to come, and attain the good thereof. The purchaſe they deſign lies there.

(3.) He is making away to the other world, as a man on his journey, Cant. viii. 5.; not only by the courſe of nature, as all others, but in heart and affections, by which the ſoul moves; hence the apoſtle ſays, Phil. i. 23. *I am in a ſtrait betwixt two, having a deſire to depart, and to be with Chriſt; which is far better.* It is true, when grace is not in exerciſe, a believer may be for building tabernacles here, he may be very unwilling to paſs over Jordan; but then he is not walking with God, but ſtanding ſtill. Sometimes when believers are in the dark as to their ſtate, or for ſome other reaſons, they may be crying, as Pſal. xxxix. 13. *O ſpare me, that I may recover ſtrength, before I go hence, and be no more.* Nevertheleſs there is never a groan they give under the body of death, never a deſire they have of perfection

fection of holineſs, but there is wrapt up in it a deſire to be with Chriſt, which is beſt of all.

(4.) He is conforming himſelf to the faſhions of the other world, Pſal. xlv. 10. It is his own country, being born from above; he is a pilgrim here, and therefore a man wondered at, as one of ſtrange faſhions. He ſets himſelf to be like God in holineſs, for that is the happineſs of thoſe that are above. As men ſerve an apprenticeſhip in a trade, that afterwards they may ſet up in it; ſo the life of a walker with God is an apprenticeſhip in holineſs here, to ſet up in glory hereafter.

(5.) *Laſtly*, He draws his great comfort from the unſeen things of another world, Heb. xi. 27. The apoſtle will have thoſe in the Chriſtian race to look off to Chriſt, *who, for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the throne of God*, Heb. xii. 2. When this world ſmiles, his chief encouragement is not from it, but from the other world. When it frowns, thence is his ſupport, Hab. iii. 17. 18. This has made the ſaints chooſe rather poverty and reproach, confinement, baniſhment, priſons, and death, than to act againſt the laws of heaven; and to undergo theſe joyfully, while the world wondered how they could bear up under them.

4. It is lively and active religion, being a walking with the living God, wherein there is not only grace, but grace in exerciſe, Cant. i. 12. That is a remarkable character given to Chriſtians, 1 Pet. ii. 5. *Ye alſo as lively ſtones, are built up a ſpiritual houſe.* What? *ſtones*, and yet *lively? lively*, and yet *ſtones?* Yes. The power of godlineſs is a compound of theſe two. It makes men lively in God's matters, yet as ſtones for ſolidity: ſolid, yet active, ſuch as their ſpirits will ſtir within them in theſe matters. There are three ſorts that cannot be walkers with God.

(1.) Dead people; they muſt be borne to their place,

place, for they cannot go. Unregenerate graceleſs people cannot walk with God. What is the reaſon that ſo few walk with God? Why, truly the moſt part of goſpel-hearers are dead people, Eph. ii. 2.; and till they be raiſed out of the grave of a natural ſtate, it is not to be expected of them. There was a great cry in Egypt while one was dead in every family; but alas! there are many ſo in many families.

(2.) Sleeping people; they are not fit for walking: and ſleeping Chriſtians cannot walk with God, Cant. v. 2. Sometimes the ſaints are going pleaſantly on their way in the exerciſe of grace; their deſires, love, faith, *&c.* are awake and ſtirring. But through unwatchfulneſs, ſecurity creeps on; and then they muſt lie down, they can go no further, till the Lord waken them, Matth. xxv. 5. And this is one reaſon why there are ſo many that have the root of the matter in them, who are not walking with God at this day.

(3.) Lame and wounded people, that have got broken bones by ſome grievous fall into ſin, Pſal. li. 8. They that have a thorn of guilt in their conſcience, cannot walk till it be drawn out. For the conſcience is defiled, the power of grace weakened, the ſoul's communion with God marred; and they cannot recover their livelineſs till they make new application of the blood of Chriſt, and renew their repentance.

5. It is regular religion, and uniform: for he that walks with God muſt needs walk by a conſtant rule, eying him not in ſome things only, but in all, Gal. vi. 16. Pſal. xvi. 8. He gives one rule of walking, extending to man's whole converſation; and ſo he that walks with him, walks regularly, aiming at a holy niceneſs, preciſeneſs, and exactneſs, in conformity to that rule in all things, Eph. v. 15. *Gr.* noticing carefully the prints of his feet with whom he walks. Now this imports,

(1.) A deſign and fixed purpoſe in religion, namely,

ly, a purpose of conformity to God in it, Acts xi. 23.—*and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.* The words are emphatic, *that they would cleave unto the Lord*, q. d. abide by his side; *with purpose of heart*, laid down and determined beforehand. A man may do a good thing in religion, which yet will not be reckoned good indeed to him; because though he did it, he had no mind to please God in it. Religion's chance-customers will never be esteemed walkers with God, Lev. xxvi. *walking contrary*, Heb. *by accident, at all adventures.*

(2.) A constancy in religion, in opposition to wavering, Heb. x. 23. Hereaway and thereaway in religion is not walking with God, who *is of one mind, and who can turn him?* Job xxiii. 13. They that walk with men, or according to their own affections and inclinations, it is no wonder to see them at one time destroying what at another time they were building up; of one way in religion to-day, and another to-morrow; for these are changeable like the moon. But walking with God, people would go even forward, and keep their way they were on; neither going off on the right hand, because others go off at the left; nor going off at the left, because others go off at the right, Prov. iv. 25. 26. 27.

(3.) An evenliness in religion, in opposition to a detestable unequalness, Matth. xxiii. 23. To run with vigour in the lesser things of religion, and move like a snail in the greatest matters of it, is not walking with God. A wide conscience in substantials, and narrow one in circumstantials, is a conscience of a profane and godless make and mould; hence is that intimation, Hos. vi. 6. *I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings.* A sincere conforming of ourselves to the duties required in the ten commands, summed up in love to God and our neighbour, is true holiness. Instituted ordinances are the means of holiness, which will

will be laid aside in heaven, when perfection in holiness is obtained. Now to be hot in these last, and cold in the other, is as detestable, as to be concerned to give meat to your neighbour, while in the mean time you stab him to the heart, to take away his life.

(4.) An universalness in religion, Psal. cxix. 6. He that makes no bones of balking some steps, walks not with God. They that confine their religion to their religious actions, and extend it not to their natural and civil actions, have no religion at all. What does it avail to pretend to a tenderness of conscience in one thing, and yet in other things to swallow a camel; to a tenderness in dealing with God, while no tenderness appears in their dealings with men? Psal. cxix. 128. Matth. xxiii. 24. This is one of the causes of Atheism and contempt of religion in the generation, Rom. ii. 23. 24. *Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you, as it is written.*

6. It is laborious and painful religion; for it is no easy life they have whose trade it is to walk on their feet, Heb. vi. 10 And it is no easy religion to walk with God. Religion is not a business of saying, but doing; not of doing carelessly, but carefully, painfully, and diligently. If ye would be religious indeed, ye must put to your hands to work, set down your feet to walk, run the Christian race, ply all your strength to strive to enter in at the strait gate, wrestle with all your might against principalities and powers, *&c.* This will be evident, if ye consider these following things, (for an easy religion is the ruin of many).

(1.) Consider the scripture-notions of walking with God, in which the life of religion lies, and you will see they imply laboriousness. It is a working and labouring, John vi. 27. *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life*; *Gr. work.* Here he that works not, shall

not eat. It is not only a working, but a *working out*, Phil. ii. 12. a bringing the work to perfection, otherwise what is wrought will be lost, 2 John 8. Some labour is easier than other; but religion is compared to that which is the hardest labour.

[1.] It is compared to the husbandman's work, which is no easy labour, ploughing, sowing, reaping, Hos. x. 12. *Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy: break up your fallow ground.* There is no ground so hard to labour, as the hard heart is to the spiritual husbandman. No ground does so quickly and incessantly bring forth thorns and briers as the corrupt nature. And whereas the husbandman for ordinary finds his work as he leaves it, the Christian rarely finds it so.

[2.] To the soldier's labour, 2 Tim. iv. 7. *I have fought a good fight.* He must watch while others sleep and take their ease, otherwise the enemy will be upon him. He must fight, he must not flee, but so fight as to overcome his spiritual enemies, Rev. iii. 21. He must pursue, Heb. xii. 14. namely, as one follows a flier, till he catch him. Heaven must be taken by storm, Matth. xi. 12. The gate is strait, there is no entering with ease; men must press into it, else they cannot come thither, Luke xvi. 16.

[3.] To the wrestler's labour, Eph. vi. 12. such as makes all the body to shake again, παλη. They must put forth their utmost strength, as those that are agonizing, wrestling with death, Luke xiii. 24. This the Christian finds in wrestling with strong lusts and violent temptations.

[4.] To the runner's labour in a race, Heb. xii. 1. That requires patience and great eagerness, Phil. iii. 13. 14.; for they must so run as to obtain the prize, 1 Cor. ix. 24.

(2.) Consider the way the Christian has to walk in towards Immanuel's land, and ye will see that religion is a laborious business. For,

[1.] It is a difficult way; though plain in itself, yet

yet to us it is difficult to know, Cant. i. 7. 8. How much precious time do the travellers ſpend in diſputing which is the way, that might be better improved in going forward? Nay, many ſpend all their days in diſputing about the way, till the ſun go down on them, and night overtake them, ere they have begun to ſet off. Many miſtake the way quite and clean, Eccl. x. 15. ſome going in the way of bare morality, ſome of drouſy wiſhes, and ſome of formality, *&c.* And many good Chriſtians in the way are brought to that paſs, that they know not where to ſet down the next ſtep; but have hard work to know the road they ſhould take.

[2.] It is a wilderneſs-way, and therefore very ſolitary, Cant. iii. 6. Canaan was a type of heaven, and to it the Iſraelites came through the waſte howling wilderneſs, where they had many a weary ſtep. An emblem of the way to heaven. There the Chriſtian often ſuffers hunger and thirſt, there he is bit with fiery ſerpents, there he is attacked by furious enemies, and there he has the Jordan of death to paſs.

[3.] It is a riſing, an upward way, Cant. viii. 5. The way of ſin is down the hill, eaſy, and therefore much frequented. But the way to glory lies up the hill; and hence ſo many are frighted from it at firſt ſight; and many that ſeem to ſet fair off once, are quickly out of breath, and ſo retire. The temple, a type of heaven, was ſituate on a hill, Moriah, 1 Kings x. 5. Much hard travel had ſome of the Jews ere they got to Jeruſalem, Pſal. lxxxiv. 6. 7.; and when they came there, they had the hill of God to aſcend into, Pſal. xxiv. 3.

(3.) Conſider what he has to walk through, that walks with God in the way of the life of religion. He will meet with troops of oppoſition, but he muſt break through them all. They muſt walk through,

[1.] Oppoſition from the devil, 1 Pet. v. 8. 9. No ſooner does a ſoul ſet on the way of God in earneſt, but the armies of hell are ſet in battle-array againſt him. The ſluggard ſays, *There is a lion in the*

way, &c. but the Chriſtian reſolutely walks forward. But it is hard work when a poor Chriſtian is engaged with a malicious and ſubtle devil, that has had five thouſand years experience of the black art of temptation.

[2.] Oppoſition from the world. The world agents the devil's cauſe for him, and never ceaſes to take the ill cauſe of the dragon againſt Michael by the end. But they that mind for heaven, muſt ſet their face againſt the ſtorm, and weather all the blaſts that come from that quarter. They will not want the counſel of the ungodly, but they muſt refuſe it, Pſal. i. 1.; the mockeries of the wicked, but they muſt deſpiſe them, Pſal. cxix. 51. Nay, ſometimes it comes to perſecution, and reſiſting even to blood; but they that walk with God, muſt go through even a ſea of blood when called, Matth. xvi. 25. Daniel would not leave his prayers for thirty days, when praying was death by the law, Dan. vi. 7. 10.

[3.] Oppoſition from their own hearts luſts. A man's enemies are thoſe of his own heart, Rom. vii. 24. Sometimes the falſe heart will be ſaying within the man, *Ariſe and let us go back to Egypt*: ſometimes with Peter, *Maſter, ſpare thyſelf*: ſometimes with Judas, *What needs all this waſte?* ſometimes with Pharaoh, *I will not let you go.* But the Chriſtian muſt over the belly of all theſe walk forward, Matth. xi 12. *The kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

(4.) Conſider what he has to walk over. There are ſome things in the Chriſtian's way to heaven, which he may be cannot get through, but he muſt go over them.

[1.] Over the belly of diſcouragements, Heb. x. 35. Satan plies the engine of diſcouragement with all his force, and often mightily prevails by it, to make the Chriſtian halt in his Chriſtian courſe. And they may long ſit ſtill, if they mind to ſit till they be removed. Nay, they muſt even break over them

and

and go forward, though it be hard labour to get over them, saying with David, Psal. xlii. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*

[2.] Over the belly of stumbling-blocks laid in the way, Matth. xviii. 7. The world is ruined by offences. Some give the offence, and others take it; *i. e.* some fall in the way, and others cannot go by the stumbling-block, but break their necks over it. But he that walks with God, when he cannot get them removed out of the way, he goes over them; but will not go off his way for them, as people generally do, Job xvii. 9. *The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.*

[3.] Over the belly of their credit and reputation sometimes. Many a time a Christian must make a stepping stone of his credit, to follow his duty; as David did, when he said unto Michal, *I will yet be more vile than thus, and I will be base in mine own sight*, 2 Sam vi. 22. And it is a general rule in the practice of godliness, that they must be fools who will be wise. That is hard; but sometimes they must even make a stepping-stone of their reputation with carnal and untender professors, and lay their account with their obloquy and reproach for following of their duty, as you may see Matth. xxvi. 7.—10.

[4.] Over the belly of their affections and inclinations. It was Levi's commendation, *Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children*, Deut. xxxiii. 9. They have little sense of practical religion, that do not see they must put the knife to the throat of their own inclinations and affections many times, to follow duty laid before them by the Lord. These are not the rule of our walk; but they that walk by their own inclinations and affections, walk not with God, but walk as they

that are *ſenſual, not having the Spirit.* And this is hard work, and ſo much the harder when they meet altogether, as ſometimes they do in the caſe of the godly.

(5) *Laſtly*, Conſider the little ſtrength we have to walk with, 2 Cor. iii. 5. *Not that we are ſufficient of ourſelves to think any thing as of ourſelves.* We got all of us a bruiſe in the loins of our firſt parents. Even ſuch as walk with God are healed but in part, the broken bones are but beginning to knit. Well, if the iron be blunt, he muſt put to the more ſtrength; the leſs one has, he muſt make the better uſe of it. All theſe conſiderations ſhew that religion is a laborious and painful buſineſs.

Well, Sirs, a ſlothful eaſy religion is a dangerous buſineſs. Take heed to it; it will not be found walking with God. The ſluggard is loſt by his own ſloth: he *will not plow by reaſon of the cold*, ſays Solomon; *therefore ſhall he beg in harveſt, and have nothing*, Prov. xx. 4. He is the unprofitable ſervant: ſee his doom, Matth. xxv. 26.—30. *Caſt ye the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs: there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.* He is unprofitable to himſelf, for he neglects his ſalvation-work; unprofitable to his Maſter, for he neglects his generation-work. Mark the ſentence; he loved darkneſs to ſleep in, he ſhall have his fill of it, *outer darkneſs.* For carnal mirth, he ſhall *weep.* He would not work becauſe of the cold, in hell he ſhall *gnaſh his teeth.*

7. It is ſelf-denied religion, Matth. xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf.* Thus our Lord Jeſus walked when he was in the world; and *he that ſaith he abideth in him, ought himſelf alſo ſo to walk, even as he walked*, 1 John ii. 6. Self-denial is one of the firſt leſſons that Chriſt puts in the hands of his ſcholars, and they have need of it in practice through the whole of their converſation. In the religion of walkers with God theſe two things are remarkable, laborioufneſs and ſelf-denial, which ſweetly

fweetly meet together in it, as the wings of the cherubims over the ark.

(1.) Laborioufneſs, working as if they were to win heaven thereby, 1 Cor. ix. 24. following holineſs with all eagerneſs, as knowing that heaven is not given to loiterers, but labourers; and endeavouring to take the new Jeruſalem as by ſtorm. For walking with God, they look on themſelves as under his eye, and therefore ply their ſalvation and generation-work. And the love of Chriſt conſtrains them to be ſerviceable to him, and to ply themſelves for conformity to his image.

(2.) Self-denial.

[1.] Overlooking their work and labour, as if God had not required it, putting no confidence in it before the Lord, nor valuing themſelves upon it in his ſight, Phil. iii. 3.; but laying the whole ſtreſs of their acceptance with God on the merits of Chriſt. This muſt needs be ſo: for,

1.) He that walketh with God is acquainted with the holineſs and ſpotleſs purity of himſelf, the exceeding breadth of his law, and the jealouſy of his Holy Spirit; and therefore he cannot miſs to ſee the imperfections of his beſt works in theſe bright glaſſes, and ſay as Pſal. xix. 12. *Who can underſtand his errors?* & cxxx. 3. *If thou, Lord, ſhouldſt mark iniquities: O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?*

2.) He honours the Son, living by faith in him, Gal. ii. 20. And that is one's going out of himſelf for all to Jeſus Chriſt, out of his own ill in point of practice and ſelf-loathing, and out of his own good in point of confidence, Iſ. lxiv. 6.

[2.] Overlooking their own ſtrength for working, as mere weakneſs, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Self-denial makes one go out of himſelf for ſanctification to the Spirit of Chriſt, as well as for juſtification to his blood, 1 Cor. i. 30. Iſ. xlv. 24. For walking with God is a walking and leaning on him to be carried on the way, Cant. viii. 5.; a ſtaying one's ſelf upon him,

as

as the traveller doth upon his ſtaff. This muſt needs be ſo: for,

1.) Whoſo tries the way of walking with God, will quickly find he is not man enough for the oppoſition he will meet with in the way, not able to go but as he is led, nay nor ſtand but as he is held up, John xv 5. The leaſt temptation or unmortified luſt, how hard is it to one left to grapple with it in his own ſtrength? Peter falls at the voice of a ſilly maid.

2) The ſcripture declares, that there is no ſafety in, nor good to be had from, one's working merely from his own inherent ſtock, Prov. xxviii. 26. *He that truſteth in his own heart, is a fool.* Nay there is a curſe denounced on him that does ſo, which will cauſe that he will never bring his work to perfection, Jer. xvii. 5. 6. *Curſed be the man that truſteth in man, and maketh fleſh his arm, and whoſe heart departeth from the Lord. For he ſhall be like the heath in the deſert, and ſhall not ſee when good cometh, but ſhall inhabit the parched places in the wilderneſs.* And therefore have we that watchword, Heb. iii. 12. *Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

8. It is humble religion, Micah vi. 8. For howſoever any may ſet up before men, they muſt needs vail their faces when they ſee themſelves in the preſence of a holy God. Proud and conceited religion is of the wrong ſtamp, for it is quite unlike the Spirit of the holy Jeſus; and of the ſaints, who, the more religious they were, were always the more humble. And the more proud and conceited profeſſors be of their religion, be ſure they are ſo far ſtrangers to walking with God. Now, this humble religion will appear,

(1.) In low thoughts of ourſelves, and honourable thoughts of others, in whom the image of God appears, Phil. 2. 3. Paul counts himſelf the chief of ſinners, though the chief of New-Teſtament ſaints. A high conceit of ourſelves, with an undervaluing of others,

others, is a ſhrewd ſign of little acquaintance with walking with God. For it is impoſſible but the man that walks with God, muſt ſee more evil in himſelf, than he can ſee in any other, that bears any thing of the holy image of God. But he that has the foul face, but looks not into the glaſs, may think it more beautiful than any that he ſees.

(2.) In being denied to vain glory, Phil. ii. 3. He that walks with God will not have occaſion to hunt after the applauſe of men, unleſs he go off his way, and ſo far leave his Leader. It is a ſad ſign of little walking with God, to affect ſo much honour and reſpect from men, and for one to trumpet forth his own praiſe; a diſpoſition ſmelling rank of a naughty heart, Prov. xxvii. 2. *Let another man praiſe thee, and not thine own mouth.* John xii. 43. *They loved the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God.* It may nouriſh one to death, but not to life, like the chameleon, to live on air.

(3.) In refuſing to ſtoop to nothing, whereby the honour of God, and the edification of the ſouls of others may be advanced; as exemplified in our Lord's humbling of himſelf, Phil. ii. 5.—8. He that walks with God will be content to make a ſtepping-ſtone of his credit, eaſe, *&c.* for theſe ends, counting nothing too low for him whereby he may follow the Lord. But alas! there is a curſed reſpect for ourſelves, that ſo prevails with many, that they count ſome duties of religion below them. And their pretended credit muſt ſpread, though it ſhould darken the heavens, and wrap up the glory of God in a cloud.

(4.) In a kindly accommodating of our ſpirits to humbling providences, Job i. 21. Sometimes the Lord leads his people very low, through afflictions, croſſes, poverty, and wants. The humble will follow him whitherſoever he goes. But the proud nothing will ſatisfy them, but riſing, and they will blacken the heavens with their murmurings and complaints when they are falling. But if our lot be not brought up to our

our ſpirits, let our ſpirits be brought down to our lot. We are on our journey out of this world, and we may come as ſoon, and more ſafely, to an happy end of it, the low way, as the high way.

(5.) *Laſtly*, In an abſolute reſignation to the will of God, ſaying in every thing, *Not my will, but thine be done*, Luke xxii. 42. Walking with God is a following of him, as the ſhadow does the body. It cauſes men put a blank in the Lord's hand, that he may fill up in it what he pleaſes. But ſo far as we come ſhort of the great duty of abſolute reſignation to the will of God, we come ſhort of walking with God.

9. It is conſtant religion. Walking is not a riſing up and ſitting down again, but a continued action, like that of a traveller going on till he come to his journey's end. Enoch walked on through the world, till he was not. It is conſtant in two reſpects.

(1.) Without interruption. It is not a religion taken by fits and ſtarts, but going on evenly, Pſal. xvi. 8. *I have ſet the Lord always before me.* Some people's religion is like an ague, wherein they have their hot fits and their cold fits. They go to and fro; they will be one day for God, and another for the devil. Whatever good mood they be found in at any time, they do not abide at it, Hoſ. vi. 4. And ſo they can never bring it to any good account; for they are always beginning, ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth. Theſe people's religion conſiſts in two things.

[1.] Flaſhes, and that is all they have from Heaven; flaſhes of affections, like thoſe mentioned, Pſal. lxxviii. 34. *When he ſlew them, then they ſought him: and they returned and inquired early after God.* The Spirit of holineſs does not reſt on them, but ſome light touches of his common influences they get, which do not abide. Hence with convictions ſometimes, and with melted but unſanctified affections, their hearts will be as when in the time of great rain every pool is full, but quickly dry again, becauſe it has

has no ſpring. Whereas it is otherwiſe with thoſe that walk with God, John iv. 14. *The water that I ſhall give him, ſhall be in him a well of water ſpringing up into everlaſting life.*

[2.] Overleaps into the holy ground; and that is all that Heaven has from them, Job xxvii. 9. 10. *Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? will he delight himſelf in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?* They do not uſually feed on God's paſtures, but at the table of the world and their luſts. God ſaw this was the temper of the Iſraelites, which made him ſay concerning them, *O that there were ſuch an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!* Deut. v. 29. They will be to-day crying *Hoſannah*, to-morrow, *Crucify him.* Religion is not their element, and ſo they cannot abide with it, Job xxiv. 13.

(2.) Without defection and apoſtaſy. We read of ſome, John vi. 66. that *went back, and walked no more with him.* They caſt off religion, and laid it by for good and all. Theſe people's walking with God, (if we may call it ſo), will be no more remembered, but to their condemnation, Ezek. iii. 20. They will never ſee heaven, Luke ix. *ult. No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.* Lot's wife was an emblem of ſuch; ſhe looked back to Sodom, and God turned her to a pillar of ſalt, for a terror to apoſtates. For ſuch he abhors, Heb. x. 38. But they that walk with God will not be,

[1.] Bribed away from him, by the allurements of the world and fleſh, which is one engine of Satan whereby he makes many apoſtates, as Judas, Demas, *&c.* How many are there who have ſometimes, by their addictedneſs to the way of God, promiſed great things, and ſo have gone on for a time flouriſhing? But afterwards Satan has led them aſide by temptations, and always farther and farther off the way,

way, till he has got them to caſt off religion altogether.

[2.] Boaſted away from him, by the ſeverities they may meet with in following the Lord, Cant. viii. 7. *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.* Sometimes Satan plays the fox, by cunning wiles to draw ſinners to apoſtaſy; and ſometimes the lion, to drive them to it by hardſhips, mockeries, hard uſage, and perſecutions. But religion, where it is of the right ſtamp, will laſt, whatever methods be uſed to put it out.

10. *Laſtly*, It is progreſſive religion; religion that is going forward, Prov. iv. 18. *The path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.* There is a mark the ſoul aims at when it ſets off in the Lord's way; and that is perfection in holineſs; and walking with God is a preſſing forward to it, Phil. iii. 13. 14. Such a one is adding a cubit to his ſpiritual ſtature. When the ſeed of grace is ſown in the heart in regeneration, the man muſt walk with God, that ſo the ſeed may grow and ſhoot forth. And ſo in walking with God the new creature grows,

(1.) Inward, growing into Chriſt, Eph. iv. 15. uniting more cloſely with him, and cleaving more firmly to him as the head of influences, which is the ſpring of all other growth.

(2.) Outward, in good works, in life and converſation. Not only like Naphthali do they *give goodly words*, but like Joſeph they are as *fruitful boughs*.

(3.) Upward; for their *converſation is in heaven*, Phil. iii. 20.; in heavenly-mindedneſs and contempt of the world.

(4.) *Laſtly*, Downward, in humility and ſelf-loathing. Thus he that walks with God makes progreſs in ſanctification.

There is alſo in it a progreſs in experimental knowledge of religion, 2 Pet. iii. *ult.* The traveller the farther he goes on, he knows the country the better: and

and he that walks with God gets Chriſtian experience. Not only is his head more filled with raw unfelt notions, but his ſoul is ſtored with ſaving acquaintance with truth. The further he goes on, he becomes the more expert a traveller to the heavenly Canaan. He obſerves what has worſted, and what bettered his ſoul's caſe; and ſo will labour to eſchew the one, and follow the other. And when he comes to a dark ſtep, he can bear out the better, that it is not the firſt he has gone through.

Thus far of the nature of walking with God.

II. I ſhall next confirm this doctrine, That the life of religion lies in walking with God. In order to this conſider,

1. That religion is not a matter of ſpeculation, but of practice. Whatever light it brings into the mind, it is for moving the heart and affections. And therefore it is called *the doctrine according to godlineſs*. And the greateſt myſteries of our religion are *myſteries of godlineſs*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. I think the devil may be a greater ſpeculative divine, than the beſt of us can pretend to be. And the apoſtle ſuppoſes one may *underſtand all myſteries*, and *all knowledge*, and yet *be nothing*, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. So little worth is the knowledge of religion without the practice, the word without the power.

2. All other practice of religion, without walking with God, is but bodily exerciſe, little worth, 1 Tim. iv. 8. The Jews wrote on their ſynagogue-doors, *Prayer without intention is as a body without the ſpirit*. And where walking with God is wanting, there is the carcaſe of religion, but the ſoul of it is away. It can never be pleaſing to God, becauſe it is not agreeable to his nature, John iv. 24.

3. The great difference betwixt the ſincere Chriſtian and the hypocrite lies here, Phil. iii. 3. *We are the circumciſion, which worſhip God in the ſpirit, and rejoice in Chriſt Jeſus, and have no confidence in the*

fleſh. What makes the ſincere Chriſtian differ from the hypocrite in his walk? Is it that he performs external duties? No; you cannot pitch upon one of theſe, but a hypocrite may perform the ſame? Is it that he knows and can ſpeak of religion better? No; a hypocrite may excel a good Chriſtian in theſe gifts. Is it that he has ſometimes a flood of affections? No; Pharaoh, Eſau, and the ſtony-ground hearers wanted not theſe. But the hypocrite never comes up to walking with God, which the ſincere does, though not always.

4. Without this there is no ſanctification, becauſe without it there is no communion with God, and ſo no ſanctifying influences. A man may pray many a prayer, hear many a ſermon, and be many a year a profeſſor of religion, and yet never be a whit the more holy, unleſs he walk with God. All without that in this point, is but the waſhing of a blackmoor, labour in vain. For ſpiritleſs lifeleſs walking will never heal our unholy nature. Hence when the heart is away from God, the man is as *the heath in the wilderneſs, and ſhall not ſee when good cometh*, Jer. xvii. 5. 6.

5. This is that part of religion that will remain in heaven for ever, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. Thus the happineſs of heaven is held out under the notion of *walking with God*, Rev. iii. 4. All divine inſtitutions tend to this. For this was the courſe the firſt Adam was ſet on, but broke off from; this courſe the ſecond Adam held; and to be brought back to this will be man's greateſt happineſs. So that without controverſy the ſoul of religion lies here.

6. *Laſtly*, Our ſpiritual life lies in communion with God. In ourſelves we are dead ſpiritually, being ſlain in Adam. Now our life is in Chriſt, Col. iii. 4. and we cannot partake of that life, but by communion with him, Gal. ii. 20. *I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.* It

is

is that communion with Christ that makes men truly lively, and their religion, religion indeed, in so far as it makes men walk with God.

I shall now make some improvement of this subject, in uses of information, reproof, and exhortation.

Use I. of information This lets us see,

1. That the religion of those is little worth, that are utter strangers to walking with God. It is but the carcase of religion without the soul. The apostle speaks of *vain religion*, Jam. i. 26. *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.* This is such. It is vain with respect to God's approbation, for he will never approve of it, Rom. ii. 28. 29.; and vain with respect to their own salvation, it will never bring them to heaven, nor abide the trial, Matth. vii. 22.

2. True religion lies not in a form, but has a power with it causing a holy walk, 2 Tim. iii. 5. True religion is not a vain inefficacious thing, but has a commanding power with it. It is in the heart like the centurion, when it says to the man, *Go*, he *must go*; and when it says, *Come*, *he cometh*. It has a restraining power, it binds up the man from sin. Job was tempted to blaspheme, but the power of godliness restrained him. It sets the man in God's way, it keeps him on it, and causes him to go forward in it.

3. That no man has more true religion than what influences his walk. God will never measure people's religion by fair words or a shining profession, but by the course of their life and actions, in faith, love, and other moral duties. God has written his law in the Bible, has transcribed it again into the renewed heart, and they write it over again in their holy conversation.

4. There is little of the life of religion in the world, there is so little walking with God in it. There are

few that have the form of godlineſs in compariſon of thoſe that want it; and yet but few of thoſe who have the form, that have the power too. How few are there that eye God in all things, whoſe hearts go along with him as the ſhadow with the body, that walk with him in ordinances, in providences, in their ſtations and relations, and in their actions, natural, civil, and religious! O how rare is practical, inward, heavenly, *&c.* religion!

Use II. Of reproof. Hence we may reach a reproof to ſeveral ſorts of perſons, that do not walk with God.

1. Thoſe that have never yet riſen up from their ſin. Walking with God is a motion of the ſoul from ſin to ſanctification, If i. 16. 17. It is like the going up a ſtair, where the firſt ſtep raiſeth a man from the ground, and ſo he goes up by degrees till he come there where he would be. Heaven is the upper room, faith and holineſs are the ſtairs, and the ſtate of ſin is the ground. But alas! many have not come the length of the firſt ſtep yet; they are ſtill in their ſins, under the guilt of them, and under the power of them. They have not with Lazarus come out of the grave, with Matthew left the receipt of cuſtom, nor with the palſied man riſen out of their bed; and far leſs with Enoch do they walk with God.

(1.) Conſider, we cannot ſay of you, *Ye are not far from the kingdom of God;* for truly ye are even as far from it as Adam led you and left you. The way to the pleaſant land is long, and your day is far ſpent; but to this day ye have not entered on the way, nor ſtirred a foot from your old ſins. Are ye not afraid, that your day go ere ye are able to overtake the journey?

(2.) If ye lie ſtill, ye will never ſee heaven. As ſoon ſhall heaven and hell meet, as you ſhall get to heaven in that ſtate and caſe. If ye ſit ſtill ye die; and therefore riſe and walk, and flee from the wrath to come.

2. Thoſe

2. Thoſe whoſe life is a mere wandering, Eccl. x. 15. *The labour of the fooliſh wearieth every one of them, becauſe he knoweth not how to go to the city.* Many ſpend their days thus wandering: among the creatures their ſouls wander, and from one they go to another; they take a miſerable round in the vanities of this world, but never go beyond them to God. They wander up and down in the way of ſin; ſometimes they fall into one miſerable courſe, ſometimes into another, but never into the courſe of holineſs. They walk in a round, whereof the centre is hell, and the circumference ſin and vanity. All their life they go from one ſin and one vanity to another, and at death, when they leave the world, they are in the ſame place they were in when they came into it: *i. e.* As they were born in ſin, they die in it, and tumble down to hell, their miſerable life being not a walking with God, but a wallowing in one puddle of ſin all along.

(1.) Your thus wandering is a ſad ſign, that your natural blindneſs is not removed, Rev. iii. 17. Your plague is in your head, and ſo your heart cannot be right. Ye have never yet diſcovered the excellency of Chriſt the Captain of our ſalvation, nor the glory of the land that is afar off, and ye know not the way leading to it. Therefore your caſe is ſad.

(2.) Remember the generation that wandered in the wilderneſs died there, and never ſaw the land of Canaan, 1 Cor. x. 5. This will be your doom, if ye continue. Ye are walking in a miſt among fearful precipices and fiery ſerpents; how can ye miſs to fall?

3. Backſliders, that have turned their backs on God's way, John vi. 66. Theſe, inſtead of walking with God, fall away from him, back to their old ſins. They gave up their names to him, liſted themſelves under his banner, but now they have turned runaways. They came under bonds to God and his way; but they have broken his bonds, and caſt away his

cords from them. They once appeared on God's side, but they have got over into the devil's camp.

(1.) Your sin is greater than if ye had never set off in the Lord's way. Ye know that relapses into a disease are most dangerous, and most hopeless; and so *it had been better for* you *not to have known the way of righteousness, than after* you *have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto* you, 2 Pet. ii. 21. For then men sin over the belly of more light than before; they cast a particular infamy upon the way of God, as if they would make the world to believe from their experience, that Christ's yoke is intolerable.

(2.) Your condemnation will be the greater. It is a fearful word, Heb. x. 38. *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* Prov. xiv. 14. *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.* As the forest fall is from the highest place, so the deepest plunge into the lake of fire is from the threshold of heaven. And when the backslider is taken in the snare of destruction, it will be a peculiar worm in his conscience for ever, that once in a day he was well nigh escaped.

4. Resisters of the Holy Ghost, whom God is using all means with to draw them to his way, but they will not come on it, Jer. ii. 25. *I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.* Not only are they called by the word, but by providence. God meets some in their evil ways, like the angel with the drawn sword in his hand meeting Balaam, and yet they will not leave it. God hedges up their sinful ways with thorns, yet they break through the thorn-hedge. Their consciences tell them they are wrong, and give them many a secret blow to drive them into the way: but they follow their corruptions over the belly of their consciences.

(1.) This is dreadful and dangerous work, as being a fighting against God and against yourselves, Acts vii. 51. But though the potsherds of the earth strive

ſtrive among themſelves, it is miſerable folly to ſtrive with their Maker. The voice of the word, providence, and conſcience is the voice of God; take heed how ye entertain the ſame.

(2.) The iſſue muſt needs be terrible, if it be continued in, Job ix. 4. For when God judgeth, he will overcome. What can be expected of it, but that God be provoked to ceaſe ſtriving with you, and to lay the reins on your neck, Gen. vi. 3. Pſal. lxxxi. 11. and afterwards call you to an account as wilful rejecters of ſalvation?

5. Enemies to the way of God, who not only do not walk in it themſelves, but hinder others to walk in it, as the ſcribes and Phariſees, Matth. xxiii. 13. There are agents for the devil in the world, who have a malignant hatred againſt the power of godlineſs, and ſet themſelves to quench the Spirit in others, by mocking, tempting them to ſin, *&c.* Conſider,

(1.) That is the devil's trade, and therefore a ſad indication of one that is a child of the devil. Let ſuch hear what the Spirit of the Lord ſays to them, Acts xiii. 10. *O full of all ſubtilty, and all miſchief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteouſneſs, wilt thou not ceaſe to pervert the right ways of the Lord?* God is eſpecially an enemy unto thoſe that are enemies to his ways, and ſo ſet themſelves to advance the devil's kingdom.

(2.) The blood of ſouls will be a heavy load; and ſuch as turn others from the way of God, their blood will be upon their head. And thoſe that ſet themſelves that way, they need not doubt but that in ſuch a corrupt world they will always be ſucceſsful with ſome, Luke xvi. 27. 28.

6. Looſe and licentious profeſſors, who walk ſo ſcandalouſly that the world may ſee they do not walk with God, Jer. vii. 8. 9. 10. *Behold, ye truſt in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye ſteal, murder, and commit adultery, and ſwear falſely, and burn incenſe unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;*

not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? There are many that profess religion, that it were telling religion they did not pretend to it. For hearken to their words, take a view of their life, there is no tenderness to be seen there. The voice is Jacob's, but their rough hands declare them to be profane Esau's. There is nothing that looks like holiness about them, but the profession of the truth; but their tongues and their lives are profane. Whoso sees them, may see their light hearts and offensive lives have nothing of the balast of the power of godliness. Consider,

(1.) A loose and licentious life, under whatever profession it appear, argues a godless and graceless heart, Phil. iii. 18. 19. It is an easy thing for people to make a profession, which costs them not the life of a lust; to addict themselves to this or that opinion, while they do not addict themselves to the study of a holy life; to pin a new creed to an old life. But were grace in the heart, and they made partakers of the new nature, it would make them study holiness in all manner of conversation.

(2.) What will the end of that way be, think ye? See Psal. cxxv. *ult. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.* And if there be a hotter place in hell than another, the hypocrite that has a profession of religion, but a licentious life, shall get it, Matth. xxiv. *ult.* And their profession will serve but to make them so much the more marks for the arrows of God's vengeance.

7. Close hypocrites, whose outward conversation is blameless, but in the mean time they are strangers to the life of religion, and walking with God, *having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*, 2 Tim. iii. 5. They go about duties, but they are strangers to communion with God; they walk blamelessly, but walk not with God; they abound in bodily exercise,

exerciſe, but are eſtranged to ſpiritual worſhip; they exerciſe gifts, but they have nothing of the exercise of grace. Their ſouls are eſtranged from the life of God, and are dead within them; and they are like ſome dead beaſts, there is nothing of them profitable but the ſkin, *i. e.* the outward form.

(1.) Conſider that religion may ſerve to blind your own eyes, and the eyes of the world, but not the eyes of God. The cloſe hypocrite will be like Ahab in diſguiſe, but the arrow hit him for all that; for there is no deceiving the eyes of the Almighty.

(2.) It will have a miſerable iſſue. God loves to diſcover hypocrites, Rev. iii 16. *Becauſe thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will ſpue thee out of my mouth.* Sometimes he withdraws his reſtraint that he has on them, and turns out their inſide in this life before the world, as Judas, Ananias and Sapphira. But he will not fail to do it at the great day, when every one ſhall be judged according to their works.

8. *Laſtly*, Gracious perſons, whoſe grace is not in exerciſe, who though they be ſpiritually alive in reſpect of their ſtate, yet are not lively, but dead in their frame, Cant. v. 2. They are not walking with God as ſometimes they have been, but are fallen aſleep, and are going after the way of their own hearts. O Sirs, ye are off the way, and I will tell you how ye may know it. A gracious perſon may know that he is not walking with God,

(1.) By the decay of his love to his Guide. This was God's controverſy with the church of Epheſus, Rev. ii. 4. *I have ſomewhat againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt left thy firſt love.* And may not the Lord ſay to many of his people this day, as Jer. ii. 2. *I remember thee, the kindneſs of thy youth, the love of thine eſpouſals, when thou wenteſt after me in the wilderneſs, in a land that was not ſown?* While the ſoul walks with God, it keeps its eye upon Chriſt, and ſeeing him cannot but love him. But the ſoul loſes ſight of Chriſt;

Christ; then out of sight, out of mind; and what the eye sees not, the heart rues not. A sad sign that ye are off the way.

(2.) By decay of love to the fellow-travellers, Matth. xxiv. 12. *Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.* There has been a day wherein the people of God have dearly loved on another, delighted to pray, converse, &c. together; and the wrong done to any of them was, by reason of their sympathy, as done to them all. But alas! where is that now? Christian love is much decayed. What is the reason? Why, as travellers as long as they are going out the road together, have a particular kindness one for another: but when they begin to stay by the way and scatter, one going to his business, and another to his, that wears off. Even so the Lord's people taking different ways, and scattering from one another, their love to each other cools.

(3.) By the decay of zeal for the honour of their Leader. If one would affront a captain on the head of his troop, all the soldiers hearts would stir within them. But when he is left alone, there is none concerned to resent the injuries done to him. I never like that zeal, that overlooking the substantials of religion, burns out on the lesser things. But this I will say, that were there more walking with God among us, there would be more zeal for the great things of religion; and if so, then more for the lesser things too. Were we more concerned for the kingdom of Christ within us, we would be more zealous for the kingdom of Christ without us.

(4.) By the decay of tenderness, and care to please the Lord, Col. i. 10. While David was walking with God, he was tender of the least sin, his heart smote him when he had cut off the lap of Saul's garment. But at another time he lay long under horrible guilt in the matter of Uriah, his heart being hardened. Sometimes Christians could have had no rest without the enjoyment of God in duties; but alas!

alas! at other times they are formal in performance of their duty as a taſk. And an evil deed will not be ſo heavy to them, as a raſh word or vain thought would ſometimes have been.

(5.) By the decay of diligence in duties, inſtead whereof ſlothfulneſs creeps in, Eccl. x. 18. He that walks with God will be diligent to note every ſtep of his way; ſo it is an ill ſign when the heart turns careleſs. He will be much converſant with God in the duties of religion, often found on the road to the throne, becauſe he has much buſineſs with heaven: but when he walks not with God, he remits of his diligence, and comes far ſhort of his former pains in his ſoul-matters.

(6.) By a decay of heavenly-mindedneſs, inſtead of which there creeps in carnality and earthly mindedneſs. Walking with God makes a heavenly life, Phil. iii. 20. And while a child of God holds at it, it tinctures all his thoughts, words, and actions with a ſavour of heaven, Cant. iii 6. But when that fails, all theſe ſavour of the earth.

(7.) *Laſtly*, By a decay of livelineſs and earneſtneſs in duties. Sometimes a child of God is like Jacob wreſtling for the bleſſing; he is very peremptory, and will not take a nayſay, Gen. xxxii. 26. Sometimes again as Ephraim like a *ſilly dove, without heart*, Hoſ. vii. 11. having neither heart nor hand to ply the throne of grace: A ſad ſign of not walking with God.

Now to ſuch I would ſay two things.

[1.] Horrid ingratitude is ſtamped on your ceaſing to walk with God, Jer. ii. 31. *O generation, ſee ye the word of the Lord: have I been a wilderneſs unto Iſrael? a land of darkneſs? wherefore ſay my people, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee?* The pleaſanteſt and moſt profitable days a Chriſtian ever has, are thoſe wherein he walks with God; and when he gives over that, his real well days are done, Hoſ. ii. 7. Then his bones flouriſh as an herb, but otherwiſe they wither like the graſs. Therefore may we

we ſay, *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe?* Deut. xxxii 6.

[2] It is eaſy to go off the way, but not ſo to get on it again; it is eaſy to halt and ſit down, but not to riſe up again and walk. Ye had need to awake in time, leſt the Lord give you a fearful wakening, either by ſome heavy ſtroke, or, which is worſe, by letting you fall into ſome grievous guilt, as he did David.

Use *ult.* of exhortation. Study the life of religion, in walking with God. Walk not after your own luſts, nor in the way of the world, either its way of profaneneſs, or its way of formality; but go through the world walking with God. I offer the following motives.

Mot. 1. Ye are going faſt through the world, and ere long will be at your journey's end. Time runs with a rapid courſe; and whether ye ſleep or wake, ye will ſoon find yourſelves paſs the border of time, Job ix. 25. 26. *My days are ſwifter than a poſt: they flee away, they ſee no good. They are paſſed away as the ſwift ſhips: as the eagle that haſteth to the prey.* The watch going wrong may run as faſt as when ſhe goes right: and the man that walks after his own luſts, makes as great ſpeed to the end of his journey, as he that walks with God. And ſince we muſt walk through the world, and cannot abide here, why will we not chuſe the beſt company in our way, and walk with God?

2. Walking with God is the only way to get ſafe to our journey's end, Heb. ii. 10. It was only Caleb and Joſhua that got to Canaan, for they followed the Lord fully. All the world is on a journey; but there are two ways, and two companies. There is the way of holineſs, and all the ſaints walk there, with the Lord on their head; and the end of this way is ſalvation. And there is the way of ſin, a broad way, wherein are many roads, bare civility, morality, profaneneſs, and formality: all the unregenerate walk there, and the god of this world on their head, and the

the end is deſtruction. Chuſe ye with whom ye will walk.

3. Religion is not a matter of ſpeculation and talking, but a matter of practice and walking with God, Pſal. cxvi. 9. *I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.* Your eternal ſtate lies at ſtake, which ye will never bring to a comfortable iſſue without this. Till ye enter on this way, ye are to begin to be religious, how long ſoever your ſtanding in a profeſſion has been. After children are born, it is long ere they begin to walk; but as ſoon as one is born again, becomes a child of God, he immediately falls a walking with God.

4. There is a pleaſure, a refined, undreggy pleaſure, in walking with God, Prov. iii. 17. *Wiſdom's ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.* This pleaſure ariſes from the teſtimony of conſcience, which is a feaſt to the ſoul, 2 Cor. i. 12. enough to make a ſick man whole; from the intrinſic pleaſantneſs in the way of holineſs, which has a ſurpaſſing beauty in the eyes of thoſe that are capable to diſcern, Pſal. cxix. 97. & 165.; and from the ſoul's communion with God it finds in that way, Pſal. iv. 6. 7. This makes the hardeſt ſteps of it pleaſant, and makes the ſoul perceive a paradiſe within the thorn-hedge of troubles that attend it, 2 Cor. xii. 10. *Therefore I take pleaſure in infirmities, in reproaches, in neceſſities, in perſecutions, in diſtreſſes for Chriſt's ſake: for when I am weak, then am I ſtrong.* And that religion is ſo ſapleſs to moſt of us, and ſuch a burdenſome thing, muſt needs be imputed to unacquaintedneſs with walking with God.

5. There is great profit and advantage that attends it, 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Godlineſs is profitable unto all things.* Walking with God makes a flouriſhing caſe of the ſoul, when others are withering and pining away in their iniquity. It is an enriching trade for bringing in ſanctifying influences to the ſoul; it promotes each part of ſanctification, vivification, and mortification.

It is the beſt evidence of ſincerity, as Gen vi. 9. *Noah was a juſt man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.* And though it does not give us a title to heaven, (it is the blood of Chriſt that does that), yet it is an evidence of our title, without which we cannot make good our plea for heaven.

Object. But what can it do to us for a through-bearing in the world? *Anſw.* Very much, *having promiſe of the life that now is*, as well as *of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Thoſe that walk with God have a promiſe of proviſion in this world, Pſal. xxxvii. 3. *Truſt in the Lord, and do good, ſo ſhalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou ſhalt be fed.* Matth. vi. 30. *Wherefore if God ſo clothe the graſs of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is caſt into the oven, ſhall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?* It is no may-be, but as ſure as the covenant can make it, Iſ. xxxiii. 16. *Bread ſhall be given him, his waters ſhall be ſure.* It is true, God's bond is not always paid as it were in money; but it is always paid in money-worth, if it be not ſo. If they get not the thing itſelf, they get as good, 2 Cor. vi. 10.—*as having nothing, and yet poſſeſſing all things.*

Nay, all the profit of religion to one's ſelf ariſeth from walking with God. For what does it avail to have the knowledge of religion in the head, while it ſinks not into the heart? That can no more ſanctify a ſoul, than painted fire can burn. All the profit of it then muſt be to others, as that of the carpenters that built Noah's ark: for he and his family only were preſerved in it from the deluge, while the builders were ſwept away by that univerſal flood.

6. Walking with God is the beſt ſecurity in evil days. There are ſinning and enſnaring times: who can be ſafe in them as they that walk with God? even as in a dark day, thoſe that keep cloſeſt with their guide, are likelieſt to get ſafeſt through, Prov. xi. 3. *The integrity of the upright ſhall guide them.* There are ſuffering times, days of common calamity; and then

then thoſe that walk with God are likelieſt to be brought through, as Noah, Gen. vi. 9.

7. *Laſtly*, This is the way all have taken, that have walked through the world to Immanuel's land. God's children only are heirs; and they that are his children muſt follow him, Eph. v. 1. There is no walking with God in heaven, but for thoſe that walk here with him in holineſs. And therefore remember, *If ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live*, Rom viii. 13.

I ſhall now ſhut up all with ſome directions and advices for walking with God.

1. Labour to be ſure ye be Chriſtians indeed, and once fairly ſet on the way, by cloſing with Chriſt. Renounce the world and your luſts; and look on yourſelves as men bound for another world, under the conduct of the Captain of the Lord's hoſts, Cant. iv. 8.

2. Lay it down for a certain concluſion, that religion is quite another thing than a parcel of external performances. It is a conforming of the ſoul to the image of Chriſt, and of the life and converſation to the holy law, by a participation of the virtue of his blood and Spirit. And therefore there muſt be conſtant endeavours to abide cloſe by Jeſus Chriſt, in the exerciſe of faith, love, and univerſal tenderneſs, not only in life, but in heart, Prov. iv. 23.

3. Being ſet on the way, labour to hold by it. Ye muſt learn not to be ſhamed out of God's way, by the reproaches of the world. Care not for the name of ſingularity, and be not aſhamed to be fools in the world's eyes, 1 Cor. iii. 18. 19. not to be bribed nor boaſted out of God's way, by any advantage or loſs in the world, Heb. xi. 24.

4. Cloſely ply the work of mortification, Gal. v. 24. What is your need of Chriſt, if it be not to ſave you from your ſins? Matth. i. 21. Beware of making Chriſt the miniſter of ſin, by going the round betwixt ſinning and confeſſing, without ſuit-

able endeavours for mortification. Mortification is no easy business; but most necessary.

5. Beware of indulging yourselves in those things that are accounted but small sins, and abstain from the appearances of evil. No man will walk with God, to whom any sin is so small that he will make no bones of it. And those that stand not to go frankly into the borders of sin, will very readily step over.

6. When ye fall lie not still, but get up again by a new application of the Redeemer's blood, and renewing your repentance. For no man can walk so but he will stumble; but then the suitable remedies are to be improved for recovery.

7. Be frequent in self-observation and examination. Take notice often how the pulse of your affections beats. Retire into yourselves, and observe the way of your hearts and lives, Hag. i. 7. And examine yourselves often as to your state and case, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Ask yourselves whether ye be going forward, or backward, what profit ye make of duties?

8. Be diligent observers of providence, Psal. cvii. *ult.* towards yourselves and others.

9. Be tender of waiting on the Lord, to know sin and duty in particular cases.

10. Be diligent in all religious duties, missing none of them, and being frequent in them all. For these are the trysting-places for communion with God, which they that would walk with him must diligently attend.

11. Prepare for duties before ye set about them; not only public duties, but private and secret ones. For the rushing on these without consideration, is the high way to make them vain and fruitless.

12. Labour to be spiritual in all things; in religious duties seeking to exercise grace, and enjoy communion with God; and even in other things, to act as under his eye, and by influence of his command.

13. *Lastly*, Live by faith, 2 Cor. v. 7. For it is by faith that the soul is set and kept in this walk.

DIS-

DISCOURSES ON PRAYER.

Of the Nature of Prayer in general; with the Import of praying without ceasing.

The substance of two Sermons preached at Etterick, in the year 1727.

1 THESS. v. 17.

Pray without ceasing.

THESE words are an exhortation briefly delivered, as laws use to be; and therein we have, 1. A duty proposed, *Pray*. 2. The manner of it, *without ceasing*.

I. We have the duty itself, *Pray*. It may be asked, What is prayer? I answer, It is "an offering "up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to "his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of "our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his "mercies." Here I shall consider,

1. The object of prayer, or whom we are to pray to.
2. The parts of prayer.
3. The matter of it.
4. In whose name we are to pray.
5. The several kinds of prayer.

First, I am to consider the object of this duty, or whom we are to pray to; that is, God; not to saints and angels, as the Papists do; for prayer is a part of religious worship, and therefore due to God only, Matth. iv. 10. and he only knows all things, and is present every where to hear us, Is. lxiii. 16. To all the three persons in the Trinity prayer is due. That it

is so to the Father, no body doubts. That it is due to Christ, the Son, appears from Stephen's calling upon him in his last moments, and saying, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*, Acts vii. 59. Even Christ the Mediator is to be worshipped, though his divine nature is the reason why he is worshipped, Heb. i. 6. *And let all the angels of God worship him.* The Holy Ghost also is to be worshipped, as appears from the apostolical benediction, 2 Cor. xiii. 14.—*The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.*

In respect of the object of worship, people would do well to satisfy themselves, in their addresses to God, with the belief of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, who are but one object of worship, and not think to comprehend God, but to make use of the names and titles he has taken to himself in the word. Beware of imaginations of God or the three persons, and of dividing the object of worship, as if praying to the Father, you did not also pray to the Son and the Holy Ghost.

It is most necessary our prayers begin with such a description of God, as may both strike fear and dread in our hearts, and confidence of being heard; as, *Our Father, which art in heaven; O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant, and mercy*, &c. Dan. ix. 4. And this will readily be the case, if we have due thoughts of his glorious Majesty and infinite excellency.

Secondly, The parts of prayer are three, (1.) *Confession*, (2.) *Thanksgiving*, and (3.) *Petition.*

1. *Confession*, Dan. ix. 4. 5. *I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant, and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments: we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled*, &c. It well becomes sinful dust and ashes, in addresses to God, to come with a blush in the countenance, and tears in the eye, and confession in the mouth. It is necessary

neceſſary to humble us in the ſight of God, and it is the humble only that are heard, Pſal. x. 17. Confeſſion is the vomiting up of the ſweet morſel, and God has joined pardon and confeſſion together, 1 John i. 9. *If we confeſs our ſins, he is faithful, and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs.* God's ears are ſhut to thoſe whoſe mouths are bound up from this. Some ſay they cannot pray: O can ye not confeſs what you are, have done, and daily are doing? How can ye want matter of prayer, while ye have ſo many ſins to confeſs?

2. *Thankſgiving*, Phil. iv. 6. *In every thing by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known unto God.* Every man is God's debtor for mercies, as well as ſins; the leaſt return ye can make, is to acknowledge debt. He that is unthankful for what he has got, cannot think to come ſpeed in addreſſes for more.

3. *Petition*, wherein prayer properly conſiſts. It is an offering up of our deſires to God. Wherein we may note the act of prayer, *offering up our deſires.* The prayer that God makes account of is firſt in the heart, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. *I will pray with the ſpirit, and I will pray with the underſtanding alſo.* It is a pouring out of the heart to God, Pſal. lxii. 8. The Spirit of God moves on the waters of our affections, and then they are poured out before the Lord, as the water of the well of Bethlehem was by David Many times our prayers come as mud out of a veſſel; but as water they ſhould flow freely. Then

In prayer there are real deſires of what we ſeek of God, which deſires are offered to the Lord. The mouth muſt not ſpeak out any thing but what is the deſire of the heart. It is dangerous to mock God, who knows the heart; to confeſs ſin, and not have the heart affected with it; to ſeek ſupply of wants from him, and not have the heart impreſſed with a due ſenſe of the want of them. There are two ſorts of deſires.

(1.) There

(1.) There are *natural* desires, which are the mere product of our own spirits, offered unto God, but not regarded as prayer (Hos. vii. 14.) by the Lord. These may be not only for temporal things, but for spiritual also, as those who said to Christ, *Lord, evermore give us this bread.* A natural man, from a gift of prayer, may seek grace and glory, as a bridge to lead him over the waters of wrath; but coming only from their own spirits, such a prayer is not acceptable.

(2.) There are *spiritual* desires, Zech. xii. 10. which the saints breathe out unto God, having them first breathed into them by the Spirit, Rom. viii. 26. And these may be for temporal things, as well as spiritual, accepted, seeing they are put up in a spiritual manner. These are always sincere and fervent, so as the soul earnestly craves the things sought.

Thirdly, The matter of prayer, or what we are to petition and seek for. These are, the things that are agreeable to God's will. To pray for the fulfilling of unlawful desires, is horrid, Jam. iv. 3. But the will of God is the rule of our prayers, 1 John v. 14. *This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* We find the will of God in his commands and promises. Whatever God has commanded us to seek, whatever he has promised, that we may and ought to pray for. These are, (1.) Spiritual mercies, grace, glory, the increase of grace, comforts, *&c.* (2.) Temporal mercies, health, strength, *&c* mercies relating to our bodies and temporal estate in the world.

Some have no freedom to bring their temporal concerns to their prayers. *Answ.* That we may and ought to do it, is plain,

1. In that God has given them a place in his covenant; they are promised as well as spiritual mercies, 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* Is. xxxiii. 16. *Bread shall be given him,*

him, his waters shall be sure. Psal. i. 3. *Whatsoever he doth shall prosper.*

2. It has been the practice of the saints in all ages. Memorable is Agur's prayer, Prov. xxx. 8. *Give me neither poverty, nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me.*

3. Christ teaches us so to do in that pattern of prayer, Matth. vi. 9 *&c. Give us this day our daily bread;* where we may observe, that they ought to have a place in our prayers daily.

4. God has commanded it, Phil. iv. 6. *Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* Ezek. xxxvi. 37. *Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.* Compare ver. 30. 33. *&c. I will multiply the fruit of the tree,* &c. It is a general command, *In all thy ways acknowledge him,* Prov. iii. 6.

5. Sin and duty are very large. Men are under a law as to their management of temporal concerns, and light and wisdom should be sought for the same from the Lord, Psal. cxii. 5. *A good man will guide his affairs with discretion.* No doubt many things go the worse with us, that God is so little owned in them. If that be true, that *God doth instruct the plowman to discretion, and doth teach him,* Is. xxviii. 26. there is good reason we pray, that *God may establish the work of our hands upon us,* Psal. xc. *ult.* Surely those Christians that neglect it, deprive themselves of many experiences of the Lord's kindness. For the temporal mercies they meet with, were they answers of prayer, would be so many experiences of the Lord's love, Is. xli. 11. Nay, I think it were a piece of Christian prudence, for the child of God, when he finds his heart not so affected as he would have it for spiritual mercies, to make an errand to God of a temporal mercy, whereby his heart may be the more fitted for asking spiritual blessings; as we have

have instances often in the Psalms, and also in the famous wrestling of Jacob. Only,

(1.) Pray for temporal mercies for the sake of spiritual, not contrariwise, Matth. vi. 33. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.* Prov. xxx. 8. 9. *Give me neither poverty, nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

(2.) Keep within the bounds of the promise. Now, all promises of temporal things have this condition, if they be for God's glory and his childrens good. Pray so, as you may be content to want them, if God see it meet. But as for grace, the favour of God, and communion with him here and hereafter, it can never be our duty to be content to want them, 1 Thess. iv. 3. *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.*

Fourthly, In whose name are we to pray? In the name of Christ, John xiv. 13. 14. *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* This is to plead the merits of Jesus Christ. We must come to God in the name of Christ, laying all the stress upon his merits. All things go by favour in the court of heaven; the Father hears us for the Son's sake. This implies that we must be in Christ, before we can pray acceptably. But I shall consider this particular more fully, when I come, in course, to speak of praying in the name of Christ.

Fifthly, There are several kinds of prayer. I shall speak a word to these three, *ejaculatory*, *secret*, and *family*.

1. *Ejaculatory* prayer, which is a sudden dispatch of the desires of the soul to heaven, upon any emergent occasion; sometimes with the voice, and sometimes without it. I will say of it,

(1.) It

(1.) It has been the practice of the saints. Thus Jacob, when making his testament, says, Gen. xlix. 18. *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.* And when giving charge to his sons concerning Benjamin, chap. xliii. 14. *God Almighty give you mercy before the man,* &c. Moses, when brought into a great strait at the approach of the Egyptians, Exod. xiv. 15. *The Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.* David, when told of Ahithophel's being among the conspirators with Absalom, says, 2 Sam. xv. 31. *O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.* And Nehemiah, when in the king's presence, and asked by him his request, says, chap. ii. 4. *I prayed to the God of heaven.*

(2.) Such prayers are very necessary. Light and strength for duty, against temptation, &c. are often needed, when we cannot get to our knees.

(3.) They are very useful for present help, and are notable means to keep the soul habitually heavenly and in a proper frame, when we make more solemn approaches to God.

(4.) It is no small mercy, that God's door stands always open, and that our prayers may be at heaven, before we can be at a secret place.

2. *Secret* prayer, wherein the man or woman goes alone to a secret place, and they pour out their souls before the Lord.

(1.) It is commanded expressly by our Lord, Matth. vi 6. *When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret,* &c.

(2.) They will have much ado to evidence their sincerity, whose prayers are all before men, Matth. vi. 5. 6. *When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men,* &c. A hypocrite may pray in secret; but a sincere soul will be loath to neglect it.

(3.) As

(3.) As no man knows our caſe ſo well as ourſelves, ſo it is a ſign of little acquaintance with our own hearts, if we have not ſomething to tell Chriſt, which we cannot tell before others, Cant. vii. 11. 12. *Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field: let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us ſee if the vine flouriſh, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.*

(4.) The greateſt enjoyments of the people of God have been in ſecret prayer; as in the caſe of Jacob, Daniel, *&c.*

3. *Family*-prayer. God muſt be worſhipped in our families, as well as in our cloſets.

(1.) God commands it, in ſo far as he requires every kind of prayer, Eph. vi. 18. *Praying always with all prayer.* The ſcripture ſpeaks of a church in Aquila's houſe, Rom. xvi. 5. Surely the family was not ſuch a one that ſhut God out of doors. The family ſacrifice was God's ordinance, Exod. xii. 21. *Draw out, and take you a lamb, according to your families, and kill the paſſover.*

(2.) It was the practice of Chriſt, Matth. xxvi. 30. John xvii. and of the ſaints, as Job, chap. i. 5. Joſhua, chap. xxiv. 15. and Cornelius, Acts x. 2. Eliſha prayed with his ſervant, 2 Kings iv. 33.

(3.) The maſter of the family has the charge of the ſouls under his roof; and ſurely the caſe of a family requires family-prayer. Are there not family wants, ſins, and mercies, that require ſuch an exerciſe?

O what a heavy vengeance abides families that are without the worſhip of God! Jer. x. 25. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name.* That houſe that is not ſanctified by prayer, is like to be the houſe of the wicked, where God's curſe is. How will ye anſwer for the ſouls committed to your charge, who do not pray in your families? No wonder godly perſons ſhould ſcare at your family; though indeed it is to be

be lamented, that many profeſſors like Jonah will flee from the preſence of the Lord, out of a praying family to a prayerleſs one; whom a ſtorm ſometimes purſues.

Before proceeding to the other head, the manner of praying, permit me to make a very brief improvement of what has been ſaid.

1. Let me addreſs myſelf to thoſe that live in the total neglect of this duty of prayer. O repent and amend, and ſet about this neceſſary duty. Conſider,

(1.) A prayerleſs perſon is a graceleſs perſon, in a ſtate of wrath, in the gall of bitterneſs and the bond of iniquity. No ſooner is Paul converted, but *behold he prayeth.* Still-born children cannot be heirs. The Spirit of grace is the Spirit of ſupplication. The Spirit makes us to cry, *Abba, Father.*

(2.) A prayerleſs perſon is a thief and a robber of what he poſſeſſes in the world. How dareſt thou uſe God's creatures, and not aſk his leave? 1 Tim. iv. 4. 5. *For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refuſed, if it be received with thankſgiving: for it is ſanctified by the word of God and prayer.* Surely, thou prayerleſs one, a curſe is on thy houſe, thy baſket, and thy ſtore. But alas! many live like ſwine; they never look up to heaven, nor cry till the knife of death be at their throat.

(3.) It is a privilege that God will allow us to come ſo near him, and to pour out our hearts before him, a privilege bought by the blood of Chriſt. The prayerleſs perſon undervalues this rich privilege, trampling on that blood that bought it, which will be a worm in his conſcience in hell that will gnaw it for ever.

(4.) Thy ſoul lies at ſtake. That dumb devil that poſſeſſes thee, muſt be caſt out of thee, or thou art undone for ever. Thou art loſt by nature; wilt thou not cry for the life of thy poor ſoul? God ſays to thee, as Pilate to Chriſt, John xix. 10. *Speakeſt thou not unto me? knoweſt thou not, that I have power to* damn *thee, and have power to* ſave *thee?* Thou canſt

not be ſaved without calling on the Lord by prayer.

But perhaps one may ſay, I will pray on a death-bed. *Anſw.* What if God cut thee off in a moment? what if thou die in the rage of a fever? how knoweſt thou that God will then hear thee? Ponder and ſeriouſly conſider what the Lord ſays, Prov. i. 24.—31. *Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproof: I alſo will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind; when diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh upon you. Then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not chooſe the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counſel: they deſpiſed all my reproof. Therefore ſhall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.* And remember that ſuch a conduct will bring you to that miſerable paſs deſcribed, Iſ. viii. 21. 22. *And they ſhall paſs through it, hardly beſtead and hungry: and it ſhall come to paſs, that when they ſhall be hungry, they ſhall fret themſelves, and curſe their king, and their God, and look upward. And they ſhall look unto the earth: and behold, trouble and darkneſs, dimneſs of anguiſh; and they ſhall be driven to darkneſs.*

Another may ſay, I cannot pray. *Anſw.* Will ye try, for God calls thee; thou mayſt expect aſſiſtance, Exod. iv. 11. *Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the ſeeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?* Seriouſly conſider thy ſtate and ſins, and thou ſhalt have matter for confeſſion; conſider thy mercies, and thou ſhalt have matter for thankſgiving; conſider thy wants, and thou ſhalt have matter for petition. Though thou canſt not expreſs thyſelf as ſome others, yet be ſincere. Parents love to hear their babes that are learning to ſpeak; and God will never refuſe to hear the ſincere language of

of a heart, though it is not expreſſed in the moſt proper words.

2. To praying perſons I would ſay, Continue conſtantly in this duty of prayer, and never give it over as long as you live. Conſider,

(1.) Your need, wants, temptations, ſnares, *&c.* never ceaſe, nor will ceaſe while ye are here; and why ſhould ye ceaſe to pray? God will have his people live from hand to mouth, becauſe he loves to have them always about his hand.

(2.) Praying is a ſoul-enriching trade. It is a trade with heaven, and brings down temporal and ſpiritual mercies. He that drives this trade moſt diligently, will be found the moſt thriving Chriſtian. Surely the leanneſs among profeſſors is owing to this neglect in a great meaſure.

(3.) If ever a time called for prayer, this time does, while the ark of God is in hazard, and damnable errors are ſpreading. O then pray, and pray frequently, and ere long your prayers ſhall be turned to praiſes.

II. I proceed to conſider the manner of praying, or to ſhew, in what reſpects we are to *pray without ceaſing*. This is not to be underſtood as if we ſhould ſpend our whole time in the exerciſe of prayer: for there are many other duties, both of our ſtation in life and as Chriſtians, that we are bound to perform; and theſe muſt have their time; and God does not bind us to inconſiſtencies. But we muſt,

1. Pray *frequently*, as David did, Pſal. cxix. 164. *Seven times a day do I praiſe thee: becauſe of thy righteous judgements.* The Chriſtian ſhould be no ſtranger to, but often at that work. It is a piece of walking with God, wherein the ſoul ſeeks communion with Heaven, and wherein he ſhould abound, Col. ii. 6. 7. We find Daniel frequently at it, when it was death to pray, Dan. vi. 10. See Pſal. lv. 17. *Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and he ſhall hear my voice.* Hereby may

be known what case the soul is in; the more diligent one is in this duty, he will be the more thriving.

2. Pray *statedly*, without ceasing from the set times of prayer. These are evening and morning. The morning and evening sacrifice were called *the continual burnt-offering*, Exod. xxix 39. 41. 42. as being offered continually at these times. And these times were the times of prayer, Acts iii. 1. The light of nature itself teaches us to begin and end the day with the worship of God. And they should be reckoned lost days that are not so begun and ended.

3. Pray *occasionally*, without ceasing from embracing occasions of praying which the Lord puts in your hand. Do as David did, Psal. xxvii. 8. *When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* An observing Christian will sometimes find himself called to pray between hands; and it is dangerous to sit the motion of an occasional tryst that God sometimes sets a person. To such a tryst there concurs, (1.) An inward moving of the soul to converse with God by prayer, Psal. xxvii. 8. just cited; the Spirit of the Lord exciting to duty, by representing a particular need, or fit occasion of converse with God, and so pressing a man forward to the throne to supplicate. (2.) A fair opportunity for it, Gal. vi. 10. And forasmuch as there may be motions to prayer, that are not from the Spirit of God, they may thus be discerned by the unseasonableness of them; for the Spirit of God puts people to duty seasonably, Psal i. 3.

4. Pray *constantly*, Eph. vi. 18. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.* There must be a persevering in this duty, in the several kinds thereof, as the Lord gives opportunity. And this imports a continuing the course of praying, never giving up with it while breath remains, nor giving it over for a time, Psal. cxix. 112. The latter makes way for the former, as swooning does for dying for good and all.

5. Pray

5. Pray *importunately*, not fainting nor giving over your tabled petitions as long as your needs remain, but resolutely pursuing them before the throne; Luke xviii. 1. *And he spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* Pray till ye get the answer of your prayers, if it should be never so long delayed. God loves to have such petitioners about him, as are resolute, and will not take a nay-say, as in the woman of Canaan's case, Matth. xv. 22.—28.

6. Be *habitual* in the use of ejaculatory prayer; for this is a kind of prayer that can be mixed with whatever other good thing ye are about. There is an occasion for lifting up the heart to the Lord in an ejaculatory petition, in every business that is lawful, and in every company; and there is always an opportunity for it too. All our actions should be seasoned with it.

7. *Lastly*, Keep your hearts always in a *praying frame*; that whenever God calls you, you may be ready as the soldier at the sound of the trumpet, Eph. vi. 18. Hereto two things are necessary. (1.) That ye keep a clean conscience, watching against sin, having habitually recourse to the blood of sprinkling, Heb. ix. 14. (2.) That ye use moderation in all things, Phil. iv. 5. That joy or sorrow, eating or drinking, working or diversion, that unfits a man for prayer, is too much; for glorifying God is our chief end, to which all other ends must be subordinated, 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

Use I. Of reproof to those that being come to years of discretion,

1. Have not yet begun to pray; but live like beasts, eating, working, or playing, and sleeping, but have not begun to pray to the God that made them. Ah! know ye not that ye must die, and live eternally in another world? that ye are criminals, and have forfeited

forfeited your life by your sin? that ye must be pardoned, or perish? And ye that have not set up God's worship in your families, will ye not give God house-room with you? Know your danger, and flee from the fury which the Lord will pour out on those who call not on his name.

2. Those that have left off praying. Sometimes they have prayed, but have given it over now; some in secret, and some in their families. Remember that this makes you apostates, and that apostasy is very dangerous. Consider the two following scripture-passages, 2 Pet. ii. 21. *It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.* Heb. x. 38. *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

3. Those that pray now and then only, as it suits with their conveniency. Some will pray on the Sabbath-day, when they have no other thing to do. Sometimes they are in a good mood, and take a start of praying; at other times they will rise from bed, and go to it, without ever bowing a knee to God. They will pray at even, but not at morn. Some cannot be got to set up the worship of God in their families in the morning, others for several days in a week have no family-worship, sometimes in the year in the throng of business. Let conscience say, if that be *praying without ceasing.* Is it not a contempt of God in his worship, and like the hypocrite, Job xxvii. 10. of whom it is said, *Will he always call upon God?*

Use II. Pray without, ceasing. For, (1.) Satan never ceases to seek your destruction, 1 Pet. v. 8. (2.) Your need of the Lord's help never ceaseth: ye need direction, protection, life, strength, mercies of all kinds, spiritual and temporal. (3.) *Lastly*, Time never ceases to run, and ye know not when it may run out. There is good reason we pray always, since we know no time wherein death may not overtake us.

Of

Of the Spirit's Help in Prayer.

Several Sermons preached at Etterick in the year 1727.

Romans viii. 26.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

SOmewhat of the nature of prayer in general, with the import of praying without ceasing, has been explained to you; but it is not every kind of prayer that is acceptable to God. Among praying people there is a twofold cry that goes to heaven, (1.) The cry of strangers, not known and approved there. That is prayer wrought out by ourselves, in virtue of a natural sense of want, by a gift of knowledge and utterance. (2.) The cry of children; that is prayer wrought in us by the help of the Holy Spirit dwelling and acting in us, and is accepted of God. Of this our text speaks. In which,

1. The connection is to be noticed, *likewise*. This chapter is an inventory of the privileges of believers. (1) Freedom from condemnation, ver. 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* (2.) Sanctification, ver. 5. *They that are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit.* (3.) Comfort against death, ver. 10. *If Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin; but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness.* (4.) Sonship to God, ver. 14. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* (5.) Glorification abiding them, ver. 18. *For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time, are not*

not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us. From this high privilege the apoſtle looks down on the croſs and afflictions here laid on believers, and ſhews there is no compariſon betwixt theſe afflictions and that glory, they being but like a prick with a pin received by one in his way to a crown. And this is a firſt grand conſolation againſt the croſs laid on believers. (6.) The help of the Spirit for the preſent, in the text. And this is the ſecond grand conſolation of believers under the croſs. They have not only, under all their afflictions, eternal glory made ſure to them in end; but for the preſent time, while they are going under their burden, they have the Spirit of the Lord helping them, and particularly in prayer, the noted relief of the diſtreſſed, *Likewiſe the Spirit alſo helpeth our infirmities*, &c. And that is a great conſolation under the croſs.

2. The words themſelves, in which we may obſerve two things.

1*ſt*, A general aſſertion of the Spirit's aſſiſting of believers in the midſt of their infirmities. And here, (1.) There is ſomething ſuppoſed, namely, That they are compaſſed with infirmities while here. They are recovered of their deadly ſickneſs of ſin, but they are ſtill weak; they are reſtored to life, but they have as yet little ſtrength, and are much bowed down with preſſures on them. (2.) Something expreſſed, namely, the Spirit's helping of them in that caſe. Weak people need help, eſpecially under heavy burdens. And believers want not help under theirs; they have the beſt of help, the help of God himſelf, the eternal Spirit of the Father and the Son, the third perſon of the glorious Trinity, by whom the Father and the Son do act in them. He *helps our infirmities*, *i. e.* helps us in our infirmities, to whatſoever we have to do or bear.

This help of the Spirit is a joint action, as the word imports. *q. d.* He *together over-againſt* takes a liſt of our burden. Where the Spirit helps, the man

man is not idle: but while the believer is going under his burden, he lifts the heavy end of it, and makes it the lighter to us: he does as the nurse with the child learning to go; the child moves his feet, but she holds him up and helps him, holding it by the arms.

2*dly*, A particular condescension, namely, his helping them in prayer, which brings great relief under the cross. And here,

(1.) We have a general infirmity that believers labour under, and that is little skill of praying. Whenever the grace of God touches their hearts, they are set a-praying: however, they are in it but like bearns, beginning to speak; while unbelievers mean-while are but like dumb people making a roar. Their weakness and unskilfulness in praying lies in two things.

[1.] In the matter of prayer, *We know not what we should pray for.* We are apt instead of bread to ask a stone, instead of a fish a scorpion; to pray for what would do us ill, and against what is for our good.

[2.] In the manner of prayer, *We know not what we should pray for* AS WE OUGHT. We cannot put our prayers in right shape, even when we are right as to the matter of them. We cannot put our petitions in form, in the style of the court of heaven.

(2.) The Spirit's help afforded them in this case: *But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us*, &c. Where we may notice,

[1.] The agent in this help, *the Spirit itself*, rather *the Spirit himself*; the meaning certainly is so, for the Spirit here spoken of is a person, not a thing; though, by reason of the language the apostle wrote in, it is expressed neutrally.

[2.] The help itself, He *maketh intercession for us*. Christ intercedes for us in heaven; the Spirit intercedes in us, by his effectual working in us, helping us to pray aright, and make intercession for ourselves. He forms our petitions for the court of heaven. No

gifts

gifts could avail to this end. If the beſt gift without the Spirit were beſtowed on a man, he could not make a prayer that would be acceptable to God, though it might be much admired of men.

[3.] An inſtance of a particular, whereto the Spirit helps in prayer, *with groanings.* Not that the Spirit's help in prayer appears in theſe only: but that even theſe groanings for divine aid, which believers have in their prayer, though they may be reckoned ſmall things; yet are really great and prevalent with God, as proceeding from and produced in them by his own Spirit; and they are more forcible and expreſſive of the deſires of the ſoul than any words; ſo they are *groanings which cannot be uttered.* It is evident, that the Spirit of God in himſelf doth not groan; but groanings are attributed to him, ſo far as he cauſes us to groan, by exciting our affections. Therefore his interceſſion is to be underſtood of his cauſing and helping us to intercede in prayer for ourſelves.

The following doctrines may be obſerved from the words thus explained.

Doct. I. *It is a comfortable caſe under affliction, where the party is helped from heaven to pray under their burden.*

Doct. II. *It is the privilege of believers to have the help of the Holy Spirit, under the infirmities with which they are compaſſed while here.*

Doct. III. *Such is the weakneſs of God's own children, that they have not ſkill to manage even their addreſſes to God by prayer aright, without the Spirit.*

Doct. IV. *All our praying aright is ſo far done by the help of the Spirit, that it is juſtly reckoned his work, his making interceſſion for us.*

Doct. V. *ult. The Spirit helps believers to pray, particularly cauſing in them gracious groanings, which cannot be uttered.*

Doct. I.

Doct. I. *It is a comfortable case under affliction, where the party is helped from heaven to pray under their burden.* This doctrine arises from the connection and scope of the words.

In discoursing from it, I shall consider,

I. What is the help from heaven to pray under a burden.

II. The comfort that is in this case.

III. Make improvement.

I. What is the help from heaven to pray under a burden. I take it up in these two particulars.

1. Help to lay the case before the Lord, and to table petitions before the throne of grace, upon the case. If any are thus helped, it is a token for good, they may take comfort of it, Psal. lxvi. 16. 17. *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.* Little do we know how to table petitions on our case at the court of heaven: but if a shower of trouble should fall on us, and withal the Spirit of prayer be poured on us, we would have no cause to complain. Though the Lord press down a person with the one hand, and stir him up to the exercise of prayer with the other, it is a hopeful case, as was that of Jonah, chap. ii. 1.

2. Help to insist and resolutely to hang on and not faint, however longsome the hearing may be, Col. i. 11. Thus the Spirit helps the children of God in prayer, Psal. cxxxviii. 3. *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me: and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul* 2 Cor. xii. 9. *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* The patience of others in applications to the throne of grace will soon be tired out; they cannot wait: so they drop the matter, Job xxvii. 10. and go to another door. But those in whom

whom the Spirit dwells, ſee no other door, John vi. 68. and the Spirit is a ſpring of living water in them, which cauſes them to hold on.

II. What is the comfort that is in this caſe. It is manifold. I inſtance in the following particulars.

1. That is comfortable in it, that the native effect of affliction is ſtopt in ſuch a perſon, by influence from heaven. Affliction in its own nature is a whip, a brier, a thorn: and the native effect of it is, to drive the ſinner away from God, to harden his heart, irritate his corruption, and make his heart a hell, Job xxxvi. 13. *The hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when he bindeth them.* But, by divine inſtitution, it is a medicine, having a promiſe annexed to it, Iſ. xxvi. 9. *When thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteouſneſs:* and ſo it brings the believing ſinner to God, as the bitter potion cauſes the ſick man turn to his phyſician, who would all he could keep himſelf out of the way of an enemy that had given him ſuch a bitter draught, Rom. x. 14.

2. It is comfortable, even that the party gets a vent to his full heart. Thoſe in a trouble find a kind of relief in pouring out their heart into the boſom of a ſympathizing friend; and it is an aggravation of affliction, when the fire muſt burn in the boſom, and there is no acceſs to give it a vent How much more is it a ſolid comfort, to be helped to pour out one's heart unto a gracious God, able and willing to help in due time? Micah reſolved to take comfort this way, Micah vii. 7. *I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my ſalvation: my God will hear me.* And Hannah got it, 1 Sam. i. 15. 16. *And Hannah anſwered and ſaid, No, my lord, I am a woman of a ſorrowful ſpirit: I have drunk neither wine nor ſtrong drink, but have poured out my ſoul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and*

and grief have I ſpoken hitherto. Ver. 18. *And ſhe ſaid, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy ſight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more ſad.*

3. It is comfortable, that the Lord takes that way to draw the ſinner to him, and keep him about his hand, and it is effectual, Hoſ. v *ult. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and ſeek my face: in their affliction they will ſeek me early.* We reckon in the world, that they are in the beſt caſe that hold all within themſelves: but in reſpect of ſpiritual thriving, they are faireſt for that who are kept from hand to mouth, and never want a new errand to God's door. The Lord loves to have his children always about his hand; but they would be like bearns at their play about meal-time, that would never mind home, if hunger did not bite them; and ſo in effect it fares with many.

4. That is comfortable in it, that it is a ſign of eternal good-will and everlaſting love to ſuch perſons, Luke xviii. 7. *And ſhall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?* They would be tired out, if they were not God's choſen, poſſeſſed by his Spirit. Do ye ſee a place which is always full of water, ſummer and winter, in the greateſt drought? ye may be ſure that is no pool, but a ſpring, John iv. 14. The man prays and wreſtles againſt a body of death, cries and goes on under a weight of trials: he holds on notwithſtanding of ſeeming fruitleſſneſs. See the verdict, Matth. xxiv. 13. *He that ſhall endure unto the end, the ſame ſhall be ſaved.*

5. That is comfortable in it, that his prayers ſhall be heard at length to his heart's content, if it ſhould not be till he get into heaven, Luke xviii. 8. *I tell you that he will avenge them ſpeedily.* The help of the Spirit in prayer is a certain pledge of the hearing of prayer, Jam. v. 18. If a poor man were to petition the king, but had no ſkill to draw his petition;

and the king ſhould ſend one from about his hand to help that poor man, and draw his petition for him: would not that be a ſign that the king had a good mind to grant it? So it is equally a certain ſign of God's good-will to the praying perſon, and a certain token that his prayers ſhall be heard to his full ſatisfaction at length, that the Spirit now helps him in prayer, and as it were draws his petitions for him.

6. It is comfortable, that the party is now and then getting ſome offallings about the Lord's hand; otherwiſe he would give over. In the way of duty, wherein people are not formal, but truly ſerious, there is a concomitant reward, Pſal. xix. 11. *In keeping of them there is great reward;* and particularly in prayer, Iſ. xlv. 19. *I ſaid not unto the ſeed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.* Though the Lord does not give the main requeſt for the time, yet he gives ſomething that keeps the heart from fainting, Lam. iii. 57. *Thou dreweſt near in the day that I called upon thee: thou ſaidſt, Fear not.* So we find it happened to Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 8. 9. *For this thing I beſought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he ſaid unto me, My grace is ſufficient for thee: for my ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs. Moſt gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Chriſt may reſt upon me.*

From what is ſaid on this doctrine, the following things may be ſhortly obſerved for improvement.

1. The Lord's croſs on his people's back, is better than the world's crown on the head of his enemies. For there is more comfort in the one's being helped from heaven to commit their caſe to the Lord, and depend on him for it, than in all the proſperity of the wicked. For all is well that ends well; and the former will have a joyful end, the latter a ſad one, Prov. i. 32. 33.

2. They are doubly to be pitied, who are under an afflicted lot, and withal ſtrangers to the duty and comfort

comfort of prayer. This world is a place wherein neither good nor bad will miſs their ſhare of croſſes. But to ſee this world frowning on a man, and in the mean time him not ſeeking his comfort from heaven: to ſee a perſon full of matter of complaints, and yet having no heart to pour them out into the boſom of our heavenly Father, is a ſad ſight.

3. Let praying people beware of afflictions deadening them, and taking heart and hand from them in prayer. Satan will do his utmoſt, to work up afflictions to this pitch; and when he has got it done, he has what he would wiſh, he has an invenomed arrow ſticking in their fleſh. Let them haſte to get it away, as ever they would caſt a coal of hell out of their boſom; and remember that *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him*, 1 John iv. 16.; that *the Lord doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*, Lam. iii. 33.; and that *all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpoſe*, Rom. viii. 28.

4. *Laſtly*, Let thoſe who are helped to pray under their affliction, be thankful, and acknowledge God has not forgotten them. When the Lord's people have plied the throne of grace long for a mercy, and yet it comes not, they are ready to think that the Lord regards them not. But if ye be helped ſtill to hang on, that very thing is an evidence that is not true; and it is a token for good in your caſe.

Doct. II. *It is the privilege of believers to have the help of the Holy Spirit, under the infirmities with which they are compaſſed while here.*

Here I ſhall ſhew,

I. What are the infirmities believers are compaſſed with here.

II. Why in the depth of ſovereign wiſdom, be-

lievers are left compaſſed ſo with infirmities while here.

III. Conſider the Spirit's helping believers under theſe infirmities.

IV. Make ſome practical improvement.

I. I am to ſhew what are the infirmities believers are compaſſed with here.

Firſt, They are always compaſſed with *natural* infirmities.

1. *Pure* natural infirmities, which though they be their weights and burdens, yet are not their ſins. There is a natural weakneſs inwrought with human fleſh, though at its prime of vigour, Iſ. xl. 6. ſo that it was found even in the man Chriſt, 2 Cor. xiii. 4. This makes God's children objects of their Father's pity, Pſal. ciii. 13. 14. *Like as a father pitieth his children: ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are duſt.* Such are the need of meat, drink, ſleep, *&c.* whereby the tabernacle muſt be daily underpropped, Matth. xxvi. 41. Even Samſon was ſore preſſed with ſuch infirmity, Judg. xv. 18. *He was ſore athirſt.*

2. *Sinful* natural infirmities, which are both preſſures on them, and defilements of them, wounding and polluting.

(1.) *Common* to them all, namely, the remains of the corruption of nature, which makes them all a company of poor weaklings, groaning under their infirmities, Rom. vii. 24. Their ſanctification is imperfect; every grace in them has the contrary weed of corruption growing by the ſide of it. Grace indeed has got the houſe, but dwells not alone in it; the Canaanites are left in the land, and they cannot quite drive them out. Hence is the ſtruggle not only with thoſe without, but thoſe within.

(2.) *Peculiar* to every one of them, namely, the particular bias of corrupt nature in each of them, ariſing

riſing from their natural conſtitution and temper; and this is a caſt of diſpoſition to ſome particular evil, commonly called *the predominant ſin, the ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us*, Heb. xii. 1. Thus the peculiar infirmity of ſome is paſſion, of others vanity, worldlineſs, *&c.* Every one will know their own; for it will be that which coſts more ſtruggle than any thing elſe, and in which they will find need of the peculiar help of the Spirit.

Secondly, They are often compaſſed with *accidental* infirmities.

1. *Sinleſs* ones. Such are afflictions, trials, and temptations, which though not their ſins, yet are heavy weights to them, cauſing them much need of help, as in Paul's caſe, 2 Cor. xii. 7. 8. 9. Thus diſeaſes and ailments of whatſoever natuie go under the name of *infirmities*, as weakening body or ſpirit, Luke v. 15. Timothy had frequent attacks by them, 1 Tim. v. 23. And in the road to heaven, ſuch weights and preſſures one way or other will not be miſſed, Acts xiv. 22.

2. *Sinful* ones, being wrong caſts of ſpirit, ariſing from education or other circumſtances, giving them as it were a ſecond nature. Such was the infirmity of the diſciples, whereby they were ready on all occaſions to mind a temporal kingdom of Chriſt, and to be ſtumbled at his ſufferings; and the bias towards the ceremonial law, which the believing Jews had remaining with them, Rom. xv. 1.

Hence the infirmities of believers may be taken up in the following particulars.

1. They have *weak heads*, for diſcerning and underſtanding ſin and duty, ſnares, temptations, and proper means for eviting the one, and compaſſing the other, Jer. x. 23. *It is not in man that walketh to direct his ſteps.* The ſubtle enemy is ready to outwit them, and by his devices to triumph over their weakneſs. Therefore we are warned not to truſt our own underſtanding, Prov. iii. 5.

2. They have *weak hearts* for venturing on difficulties, which make them ready to faint at the appearance of them, Is. xxxv. 4. And the formidable enemy is ready to damp them, and discourage them. They know themselves, how little strength they have; and their faith being weak withal, they are apt to sink in their courage for doing and suffering.

3. They have *weak hands* for doing of duties in the right manner, Is. xxxv. 3. They are not in themselves man enough for the most ordinary duties of religion; and therefore being left to themselves, they quite mismanage them, John xv. 5. 2 Cor. iii. 5. And sometimes the Lord calls them to extraordinary duties.

4. *Lastly*, They have *weak backs* for bearing of burdens, so that they are easily bowed down, yea and foundered under them, 2 Cor. ii. 16. Their suffering strength is small, considering the weak frame of their bodies, and the remaining distempers in their souls.

II. I come now to shew why, in the depth of sovereign wisdom, believers are left compassed so with infirmities while here. Surely it is not for want of power in their Father to deliver them: for he is almighty, and in the moment he gave them grace, could have perfected them in soul and body. Neither is it for want of love to and concern for them; for he has the bowels of a Father, and gave them his own Son, which was more than all that. But so it is ordered,

1. That the members may be conformed to the head, Rom. viii. 29. Our Lord Jesus did not enter to his glory, but after a long track of sufferings, Heb. ii. 10. This was necessary in the case of Christ the head, for the purchasing of our salvation, Matth. viii. 17. Luke xxiv. 26. And it is necessary in the case of believers, that they may be conformed to him, bearing the image of his sufferings, for his glory.

2. That

2. That the emptineſs of the creature may be diſcovered, and the pride of all created glory ſtained, and that the crown may be put on the head of free grace only; ſo that we may ſay, *The Lord of hoſts hath purpoſed it, to ſtain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth*, Iſ. xxiii. 9. Therein a ſcene is opened, wherein there is a full diſplay of the nothingneſs of the creature, that heaven may appear to be peopled with thoſe that could have no pretenſions to it, but on the ſcore of mere free grace.

3. That all the graces of the Spirit in believers may be brought forth into the field of battle, and exert themſelves, 1 Pet. i. 6. 7. There are ſome graces whoſe exerciſe is to be eternal, as love, reverential fear, *&c.* theſe will be exerted in heaven as well as here. But there are others that are occaſional in their exerciſe, ſuch as faith, hope, patience, watchfulneſs, *&c.* which agree only to a ſtate of imperfection: and there they have occaſion to ſhew themſelves. So, for the exerciſe of theſe, and trial of both ſorts, the Canaanites are left in the land. And therefore ſome are loaded with peculiar infirmities.

4. That the power of the grace of Chriſt may be magnified. The infirmities wherewith believers are compaſſed, make a ſcene wherein the power of Chriſt is ſignally diſplayed, as ſays the apoſtle, 2 Cor. xii. 9. *Moſt gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Chriſt may reſt upon me.* God could have ſeated Iſrael in Canaan, without ſtroke of ſword: but then Joſhua's valour, which appeared in the conqueſt of that land, had lain hid. Believers are committed unto Chriſt's hand, as the great Pilot, to guide them through the ſea of this world, to the ſhore of Immanuel's land: and it will magnify the power of his grace, that by his conduct ſo many broken ſhips are brought ſafe aſhore, through ſo many rocks and ſhelves, and ſuffering ſo many ſtorms.

5. That

5. That the bruiſed ſerpent may be beat the more ſhamefully, and Chriſt's victory and triumph over him may be the more ſignal. He encountered Chriſt in perſon on the croſs: and there he was overcome, the Son of God being an over-match for all the power of hell. But that his defeat may be more ſhameful, he is yoked with poor believers with a heap of infirmities about them; and by them too, after he has done his worſt, he is baffled at length, Rom. xvi. 20. *The God of peace ſhall bruiſe Satan under your feet ſhortly.*

And here it is worth obſerving, that our Lord Jeſus ſingles out ſome of his people to combat with Satan, loaded with ſome uncommon infirmity, whereby he has a peculiar advantage againſt them, that he has not againſt others: and all to make that malicious ſpirit's defeat yet more ſhameful. As if one, to pour contempt on his enemy, ſhould ſay, I will take ſuch an one of my children that are not quite recovered out of their ſickneſs, and I will bind one of his arms behind his back, and yet make him throw you down, and tread on you. Thus Job was ſtript of all his comforts, his children, wealth, and health; nothing left him but his life, and his unkind wife that Satan had uſe for: and Satan makes a furious attack on him to blaſpheme, when he had him at all this diſadvantage. And yet he was baffled in end, Jam. v. 11. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have ſeen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.* And when the goſpel was to be ſpread in the world, Satan had the power of the ſword and the learning in the world engaged in the defence of his kingdom: and Chriſt ſingles out a few fiſhermen, neither ſwordſmen nor bookmen, Paul excepted, and they pull it down; notwithſtanding all the magiſtrates could do by their force, and the learned by their ſubtilty, to ſupport it.

6. *Laſtly*, To ſcrew up the glory of the exceeding riches of grace to a height, Eph. ii. 7. *That in the ages*

ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. According to this dispensation, believers are drowned deeper in the debt of free grace, than otherwise they would have been, Rom. v. 20. By these infirmities wherewith they are compassed, it comes to pass that their accounts of pardoning and supporting grace are swelled with many items: the view of which will make them sing the praises of God in heaven, on a higher key than innocent Adam would have done.

III. We shall consider the Spirit's helping believers under those infirmities they are compassed with. And here I shall shew,

1. The import of this.

2. How the Spirit helps them under their infirmities.

First, I am to shew the import of the Spirit's helping believers under their infirmities. It imports in it,

1. A bent of heart in the believer toward his work and duty, set him by the great Master, Rom. vii. 22. for what people have no mind to, they need no help for. The heart of every child of God is reconciled to the whole law, Heb. viii. 10. And what God carves out for him either to do or suffer, he would fain come up to, Matth. xxvi. 41. Even when there is a felt averseness to it, this bent in the renewed part remains with him, to which that averseness is a burden, Rom. vii. 22. 23.

2. The infirmities hanging about the believer, make duty difficult to him: if it were not so, what need would he have of help? Matth. xxvi. 40. 41. These hang like weights on him, and draw him down, when he would mount upwards: so his executive powers cannot answer his will. He is at best like a bird flying with a stone tied to its foot; whereby it comes to pass, that it cannot fly far till it light, and the short way it flies is with difficulty.

3. The

3. The believer is ſenſible of his infirmities, for it is ſuppoſed that he is wreſtling under them, Rom. vii. 23. 24. He ſees, he feels, that he is not man enough for his work; that his own hands are not ſufficient for him, nor his own back for his burden: this is what drives him out of himſelf to the grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus, 2 Cor. iii. 5. And thus he lies open to the help of the Spirit, while proud nature in unbelievers is left helpleſs, 1 Pet. v. 5. *God reſiſteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* Iſ. xl. 4. *Every valley ſhall be exalted, and every mountain and hill ſhall be made low.*

4. The believer aims at and attempts to do his duty, over the belly of his infirmities. For helping is a joint action, Phil. iii. 14. *I preſs toward the mark.* Many feel a difficulty in the weightieſt parts of religion, that makes them at length to give them over. They neither have ability in themſelves to maſter ſuch a luſt, nor have the grace to betake themſelves to Chriſt for the help of his Spirit. But they ſit down contented under it, ſoothing themſelves with this, that every one has his infirmity, and that is theirs; and ſo they diſcover their hypocriſy. But real ſaints wreſtle with their infirmities, ſit not down, but go on though they go halting.

5. *Laſtly*, The Spirit of the Lord comes in to the believer's help in this caſe, ſo as the work and duty is got done. *For the Spirit helpeth our infirmities.* As the nurſe helps the child attempting to go, or one helps a man attempting to lift up a weighty burden: ſo the Spirit helps the weak believer eſſaying his duty, to perform it. He ſtretches out the withered hand, and with the aiming to ſtretch it out, power is ſent in from above.

Secondly, I am next to ſhew how the Spirit helps believers under their infirmities.

1. He helps them by his influence in gifts. Here he does two things.

1ſt, He beſtows on them gifts neceſſary for the performance

performance of what the Lord calls them to, of whatever nature that be, temporal or ſpiritual, 1 Cor. xii. 8. —11. *To one is given by the Spirit, the word of wiſdom; to another the word of knowledge by the ſame Spirit; to another faith by the ſame Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the ſame Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another diſcerning of ſpirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But all theſe worketh that one and the ſelf-ſame Spirit, dividing to every man ſeverally as he will.* The gifts of believers are various, according to the variety of their ſtations in life, and the reſpective particular duties required of them in their ſtations. Every one has not all, nor will ever have all; becauſe there are many of them which they have no neceſſity for, in reſpect of what God calls them to. But there are two things I would have you advert to.

(1.) Whatever good gift a child of God has, he will get uſe for it, for God, ſoon or late, 1 Cor. xii. 7. though for a time he may have little or none for it. For in that caſe the Spirit lays in aforehand for their help. David had the gift of muſic in his younger years; the uſe of it for God appeared afterward, when on that account he was ſent for to Saul's court, and afterwards he ordered the temple-ſervice in that point. Paul had a gift of human learning; he got uſe for it afterwards, when he fought thoſe at Athens with their own weapons, Acts xvii. 28. Moſes had a gift of extraordinary meekneſs of temper, and Job of extraordinary patience: each got as much ado with them for God.

An unbeliever indeed may have a gift, which he never has any uſe for, for God. For he always does one of two things with it; either he hides it in the earth, and makes no uſe of it at all, Matth. xxv. 25. or elſe he uſes it to the ſervice of his own luſts, Jam. iv. 3. 4. But God will not let any good gift in his own people lie by uſeleſs.

(2.) Whatever

(2.) Whatever duty, in temporal or ſpiritual things, God calls a believer to, he will, in a way of believing, get the gift from God neceſſary for it, Prov. x. 29. *The way of the Lord is ſtrength to the upright:* and iii. 6. *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct thy paths.* For it is the office of the Spirit to help his people's infirmities. And ſo a call from the Lord to any piece of work, imports a promiſe of a gift of ability for it, the ſap of which promiſe is to be ſucked by believing it: and it is withal a call to look to the Lord for the help of his Spirit. For the Lord treats not his children as the Egyptian taſk-maſters did, who would have the Iſraelites make brick without giving them ſtraw. Moſes is called to go JEHOVAH's ambaſſador to the court of Egypt: he is ſenſible of an infirmity, but the Spirit's help is ſecured to him, Exod. iv. 10. 12. Bezaleel and Aholiab muſt work the curious work of the tabernacle. Where ſhould they have learned it, when they were ſlaves in Egypt at the brick-kilns? But the Spirit helps their infirmity, beſtowing on them neceſſary gifts, Exod. xxxi. 2. *&c.*

But in caſe the believer do not go to God for the gift, in the way of believing, no wonder he want it. For is it any thing ſtrange that the help of the Spirit is not given a man, in a particular, wherein he does not look for it? as he is commanded to do, Prov. iii. 6.

2*dly*, He influences them to the exerciſe of theſe gifts, Matth. x. 19. 20. *But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye ſhall ſpeak, for it ſhall be given you in that ſame hour what ye ſhall ſpeak. For it is not ye that ſpeak, but the Spirit of your Father which ſpeaketh in you.* As every good gift is from the Spirit, ſo the ſame Spirit has not given them away ſo to any, but that he has ſtill lock and key on them, opening them out, and ſhutting them up as he will, Iſ. xxix. 14. Therefore there ought to be a dependence on the Lord, for the help of his Spirit, to the exerciſe of any gift neceſſary for what the Lord calls

calls one to. That unbelievers have a common influence of the Spirit, in the way of common providence, to the exercise of their gifts, though they look not to the hand it comes from, is for the benefit of human society: but even the Spirit's influence on gifts, coming to believers in the channel of the covenant, their blunders and mismanagements in the exercise of their gifts, are rebukes to them for their not looking more to the help of the Spirit therein, and to bring them to their duty.

2. He helps them by his influence in grace. Here he helps their infirmities three ways.

1st, He preserves the grace he has planted in believers, so as it never dies out, 1 John ii. 27. *The anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you: and ye need not that any man teach you: but, as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie: and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.* The quickening Spirit of Christ being communicated to the dead elect in the time of loves, they are made to live and believe in Christ, and so are united to him: upon which union the same Spirit takes of the treasure of grace in Christ, and plants in the believer grace for grace in Christ Jesus, Eph. i. 13. with John i. 16. And this for all time after he preserves, 2 Tim. i. 14. *That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.* John x. 28. *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* Deut. xxxiii. 3. *All his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words*, i. e. thy Spirit. Luke xi. 20. with Matth. xii. 28. Now, this is a great helping of their infirmities, if ye consider jointly these four things.

(1.) That holy quality called *grace*, is in its own nature a thing liable to be lost. Adam at his creation was endowed with a far greater measure of it than any believer has in this world: yet that holy

fire in him was quite extinguished; that heavenly plant, by one bite of the venomous teeth of the old serpent, died out quite, and withered away. How then is it preserved in believers compassed with infirmities, but by the help of the Spirit? Free-will in Adam lost it, but the free grace of the free Spirit preserves it in weak ones of his family.

(2.) It dwells with an ill neighbour, even the corruption of nature, that is quite opposite to it. The old man of sin had the first possession, the new man of grace is brought in upon him, and meets with a continual resistance; yet is preserved. There is the weight of a body of sin and death pressing grace in the believer, yet is it not crushed to death. Whoso looks into his own heart, and sees what powerful lusts are there, must needs wonder to see the pearl kept in such a dung-hill, and the spark of holy fire kept in in the midst of an ocean of corruption; and must own it to be entirely owing to the help of the Spirit, Gal. v. 17. *The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

(3.) The whole force of hell is bent for its extinction, 1 Pet. v. 8. *Your adversary the devil, as a roring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.* The image of God repaired in a believer, though but in part, is an eye-sore to Satan, he cannot endure to look at it. Therefore he uses all his subtilty, power, and unwearied diligence to raze it. He works against it incessantly, turns himself into all shapes that he may overturn it; employs his friends within, and his friends without, to the same purpose; yet it is preserved. How? but by the help of the Spirit, 1 John iv. 4. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

(4.) *Lastly*, The believer in himself is but a weak creature; he has a weak head, heart, hands, and back;

back; is eaſily outwitted by a ſubtle enemy, diſcouraged, overthrown, and bowed down. Innocent Adam's ſtrength and ſkill failed in preſerving the grace received in his creation: yet the believer's grace received in his new creation is never loſt; though of itſelf it is a periſhing quality, is ſurrounded with corruption, and the whole force of hell is employed to extinguiſh it. For why? the almighty Spirit helps their infirmities.

2*dly*, He excites grace in them, and brings it forth into exerciſe, Phil. ii. 13. *For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleaſure.* If the exerciſe of gifts depends on a common operation of the Spirit, ſurely the exerciſe of grace on a ſpecial operation of the ſame Spirit. As the fire buried under the aſhes will not ſerve the purpoſes of the family's proviſion, nor the tree with its ſap retired into the heart and root bring forth fruit; ſo grace in the habit only is not ſufficient for duty. The holy fire muſt be blown up, and through the return of the ſap to the branches, they muſt bud and bloſſom. And this is the work of the Spirit, Cant. iv. *ult. Awake, O north wind, and come, thou ſouth, blow upon my garden, that the ſpices thereof may flow out: let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleaſant fruits.* Now the Spirit excites grace in believers,

(1.) Preſenting objects to their minds fit to rouſe it up; and ſo he acts as a teaching Spirit, John xiv. 26. *He ſhall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatſoever I have ſaid unto you.* Corruption thrives moſt in darkneſs, becauſe it belongs to the kingdom of darkneſs. But light let into the ſoul ſtirs up grace, therefore it is called *the light of life*, John viii. 12. Thus the Spirit preſenting a man's ſin to him in its ugly colours, ſtirs up the grace of repentance, Pſal. li. 3.; diſcovering the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt, it excites love; and diſcovering the creature in its emptineſs, excites contempt of the world. And this is a great help: for,

[1.] We are apt to forget these things, when we have most need to mind them; as to forget human frailty, and divine might, when there is greatest need of confidence in the Lord, against the terror of man; and the Spirit in that case is the believer's remembrancer, and so excites grace, Is. li. 12. 13. *I, even I am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass? and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?* Our weakness in such points makes us need a monitor, being often like Hagar, whose eyes saw not the well, though it was very near by, until God opened them, Gen. xxi. 19. So that when such a thing is suggested, one is often made to wonder how they saw it not.

[2.] When we do mind them, we cannot command a lively sight of them, without the blowing of the Spirit, Hos. viii. 12. They lie before our eyes as so many dry bones, till the Spirit set them in motion, by setting them in a due light. Joseph's brethren could not forget, that they had been guilty concerning him, nor David that he had sinned in the matter of Uriah: but till the Spirit set these things in another light to them, they were not moved to repent.

(2.) By touching their hearts and affections, and immediately bringing them forth into exercise. Thus the sleeping spouse was awakened, Cant. v. 4. *My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.* And so he acts as a quickening Spirit. The hearts of men are in the hand of the Lord, to turn them what way he will: and so he moves them by a touch in common things, as he did the band of men that went with Saul to Gibeah, *whose hearts God had touched*, 1 Sam. x. 26.; and

and he also moves them by a touch in gracious actions, as the spouse found, Cant. vi. 12. *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.* As the thaw wind makes the frozen waters to flow amain, and the air in the bellows blows up the fire; so there is an influence of the Spirit on the hearts of believers, opening them in the exercise of grace, Phil. ii. 13. This is a great help to believers: for,

[1.] Their hearts are oft-times very dead within them, when called to duty, either doing or suffering, Cant. v. 2. 3. *I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?* Their affections are flat, and their souls indisposed for spiritual action. But when the Spirit touches their hearts, they are fitted for duty; their spiritual life is brought forth into livelinesss and activity, Psal. lxxx. 18. *Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.*

[2.] They can by no art of theirs remove that their deadness of heart and affections, 2 Cor. iii. 5. but they will lie windbound in the harbour, till the Spirit blow. They may be long toiling in rowing in the use of means, and yet be still but where they were, for all they can do. But the influences of the Spirit rising and filling their sails, they will presently make way, Cant. vi. 12.

Now, this double action of presenting to their minds, and touching their hearts, whereby the Spirit excites grace, is signified to us by comparing the Spirit to fire, which has both light and heat with it, Matth. iii. 11. And there is a twofold mean the Spirit makes use of for that purpose, *viz.* the word and providence, of which afterwards.

3*dly*, He strengthens and increases grace in them, Eph. iii. 16. *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might,*

by his Spirit in the inner man. Grace is a heavenly ſeed capable of growth, 2 Pet. iii. *ult.* and ſo admits of various degrees of ſtrength, not only in different perſons, in reſpect of which ſome are little children, others youths, others fathers, 1 John ii. but in the ſame perſon at different times, If. xl. *ult. They that wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength.* And indeed of its own nature it is a growing thing, as a ſeed: grace hath a ſeminal virtue in it, that fits it for growing and receiving more ſtrength, John iv. 14. Mean while the ſeed will not grow, unleſs it be watered from above: ſo grace grows not, but by the influence of the Spirit, Hoſ. xiv. 5. *I will be as the dew unto Iſrael: he ſhall grow as the lily, and caſt forth his roots as Lebanon.* Now the Spirit doth ſtrengthen and increaſe grace,

(1.) By frequent exciting it into action. The habits of grace, as well as others, are ſtrengthened by the repeated exerciſe of them. The more it ſhines, it ſhines the brighter, Prov iv. 18. It is for this cauſe that God has bound converts alſo to the hearing of the word, whereby their graces are brought forth into one act after another, as the object is ſtill anew propoſed: and for this cauſe he tryſts his people with a variety of incidents, afflictions, and trials, which bring their graces into frequent exerciſe, whereby at length they become ſtrong.

(2.) By bringing forth into exerciſe one grace, he ſtrengthens the reſt, 2 Pet. i. 5.—8. *And beſides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godlineſs; and to godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs; and to brotherly kindneſs, charity. For if theſe things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye ſhall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* As a maſon by laying on a new ſtone in his wall, faſtens the reſt under it; or the ſheaves of corn ſtand the more firmly, that one is ſet at the

ſide

ſide of another: ſo one grace is ſtill the better of another joined to it in the exerciſe thereof. So humility ſtrengthens meekneſs and patience, love ſtrengthens obedience in all points, and faith ſtrengthens all together; like a band or key-ſtone in an arch, the more firm it is, the firmer is the whole arch: ſo the Spirit, by bringing forth one grace in the believer's heart after another, ſtrengthens the whole collection, and makes it the more firm and ſteady.

(3.) By affording them Chriſtian experiences, whereby they find the truth and reality of what they have believed, and the bleſſed ſenſible advantage of the exerciſe of grace, Rom. v. 3. 4. 5. *We glory in tribulations alſo, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not aſhamed, becauſe the love of God is ſhed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghoſt which is given unto us.* Experienced Chriſtians are therefore always the ſtrongeſt Chriſtians, even as the ſpoil got in one battle helps the ſoldier to fight the more ſtoutly in the next, 1 Sam. xvii. 36. 2 Tim. iv. 17. 18. Former experiences are the traveller to Zion's way-marks in dark ſteps, and his cordials in difficult aſcents. Every taſte of divine goodneſs and grace refreſhes and ſtrengthens. Now it is the Spirit that gives theſe experiences, John xvi. 14. *He ſhall receive of mine, and ſhall ſhew it unto you.*

(4.) By immediate ſupplies of grace, Phil. i. 19. *I know that this ſhall turn to my ſalvation through your prayer, and the ſupply of the Spirit of Jeſus Chriſt.* As the lamp is preſerved from going out, and is cauſed to burn more vigorouſly, by new oil poured in; ſo grace is ſtrengthened by the Spirit giving new ſupplies thereof, Iſ. xliv. 3. 4. Hence the Spirit is ſaid to *build us for an habitation to God*, Eph. ii. *ult.* He works the firſt grace; and all the intermediate ſupplies of it, and the perfecting of it, are his, Pſal. cxxxviii. *ult. The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.* Now, this is a great help: for,

[1.] Weighty

[1.] Weighty is the work that lies to the believer's hand; doing work, ſuffering work. The Chriſtian life is no eaſy life, however men that go no further than the outſide of it, may make it ſo to themſelves. It is a ſtriving, taking by force, running, labouring, fighting, *&c.* How could it be managed, but that the Spirit helps?

[2.] Great is the oppoſition that they muſt work againſt, Eph. vi. 12. *For we wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places.* The wind will be blowing in their face from hell at all times; and ſometimes they will meet with violent ſtorms. How could they ſtand againſt it, if the Spirit did not help?

[3.] Weak are the hands that work is put into, that has all that oppoſition. There is a feebleneſs natural to them, that makes them oft hang down. How could they ever do that work maugre ſo much oppoſition, but that the Spirit helps them?

The means which the Spirit of God makes uſe of to preſerve, excite, and ſtrengthen grace in believers, and ſo to help them, are two.

1. Providences, Pſal. xcii. 4. *For thou, Lord, haſt made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.* The kingdom of providence is put in the hand of the Mediator, for the behoof of the kingdom of grace; and he guides it by his Spirit. The wheels of providence are managed by the Spirit, Ezek. i. 20. and ſo managed as to help believers in their infirmities. And here two things are eſpecially to be noticed.

(1.) Seaſonable turns of the wheel of providence, whereby the believer's wain is often kept up when it is at the overſetting, 1 Cor. x. 13. *God is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Pſal. xciv. 18. *When I ſaid, My foot ſlippeth: thy mercy, O Lord, held*

held me up. Thus many times the believer is brought to an extremity, as Isaac when the knife was at his throat, when providence seasonably interposes for his relief and outgate, Psal. cxxv. 3.

(2.) Seasonable intermixtures of providence. Thus the Spirit intermixes encouraging dispensations with difficult duties, Judg. vii. 13. 14. merciful incidents with their sharp afflictions; and on the other hand, afflicting incidents with their prosperity: and all that they may neither be swallowed up with adversity, nor destroyed with prosperity.

2. Ordinances, Is. xii. 3. *Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.* These are instituted by the King of Zion, for the special means of grace, whereby his Spirit is to work, and to render them effectual. And the experience believers have of the Spirit's helping their infirmities by these, makes them very precious in their sight. And among these there are two especially used for this end.

1*st*, The sacraments. They are exciting and strengthening ordinances particularly, and consequently preservative of grace. The eunuch's experience witnesseth this as to baptism, Acts viii. 39. he *went on his way rejoicing.* And the Lord's supper is *the communion of the body and blood of Christ*, 1 Cor. x. 16. which by the Spirit's working, has been to the experience of many a great help.

2*dly*, The word. This is the most special mean. Providence has its efficacy from the word, and so have the sacraments. It is their continual mean of help, their every-days meal, which they can go to when providence is most louring, and sacramental occasions offer not. And the Spirit uses it for their help three ways.

(1.) Preached, 1 Cor. i. 21. *It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* This affords to the attentive believer a continued occasion of the exercise of his faith and love, while a variety of

of ſpiritual truths and objects are repreſented to him, in their turn; which the Spirit makes uſe of to draw forth his graces into exerciſe. Whence believers go away inſtructed, warmed, ſtrengthened, in a word edified, by reaſon of ſo many actings of grace, during their hearing, like the two diſciples going to Emmaus, when they ſaid, *Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the ſcriptures?* Luke xxiv. 32.

(2.) Read, 1 Tim. iv. 13. *Till I come, give attendance to reading.* This has the ſame advantages attending it. Thereby the Spirit of God ſpeaks immediately to the believer by his own word in his own expreſs terms. And the experience of the uſefulneſs of this mean, has made ſaints prize their Bibles as their life.

(3.) Suggeſted, John xiv. 26. *He ſhall bring all things to your remembrance, whatſoever I have ſaid unto you.* The bringing of the word to mind with a man is the office of the Spirit; and by that means he helps believers infirmities, bringing a word ſuitable to their caſe, into their remembrance, whether to clear them in doubts, comfort them under preſſures, direct them in difficulties, or check them for their debordings, *&c.* And herein he uſes often the very words of the Bible; always what is the ſenſe and doctrine of the Bible. And,

[1.] Sometimes the Spirit barely ſuggeſts the word to the mind, without any peculiar light about it, or power impreſſing it, John xiv. 26. juſt cited. Thus it is prefented as an object for the believer to act faith on, and is a call to look up to the Spirit to enlighten it, and help to believe it, Acts viii. 30. 31. And thus a word at firſt coming in this way, comes afterwards to be illuminated, by the Spirit's ſhining on it to the man.

[2.] Sometimes there is a peculiar light and power that comes along with it at the very firſt, clearly holding out the meaning of it, and impreſſing it ſo on

on their hearts, that they must needs believe and embrace it, John ii. 17. *And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.* There were many Old-Testament passages speaking more clearly of Christ, which they understood not: but the Spirit thus suggested this to them.

Meanwhile it is to be observed, that all suggestions of the word are not from the Spirit of God. That Satan may suggest scripture to a man, is evident from Matth. iv. 6. Therefore is that warning, 1 John iv. 1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* But the cloven foot may be discerned in such cases two ways.

[1.] They are always of a tendency to drive sinners away from Christ, 1 John iv. 2. 3. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.* And they tend to drive out of the road of duty, Matth. iv. 6. *And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.* This was the design of the testimony he gave to Christ, and to his apostles; while the testimony was indeed true in itself, he gave it maliciously, for an ill end. Therefore mark the tendency of suggestions of the word. Whatever tends to carry off from faith in Christ, or from any point of commanded duty, is not from the Spirit. For his work tends to faith and sanctification. Hence,

[2.] They are always applied by him contrary to their true sense and scope: forasmuch as the Lord's word cannot serve an ill purpose, unless it is wrested: as is evident from what the devil says to Christ, Matth. iv. 6. above cited, compared with Psal. xci. 11. 12. *For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee*

thee in all thy ways. They ſhall bear thee up in their hands, leſt thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone. And therefore the ſcripture-paſſage is to be conſidered, and how it agrees with other ſcriptures as to the ſenſe and ſcope in which it is ſuggeſted, Matth. iv. 7. *Jeſus ſaid unto him, It is written again, Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and leads to the true ſenſe and ſcope of ſcripture, John xvi. 13.

I add one obſerve more on the means, namely, That ſometimes the Spirit helps believers infirmities, by a particular providence tryſting the word to their caſe. This often comes to paſs in hearing the word preached, while the word in its ordinary courſe is brought directly to what is their caſe in the time; ſo that it is like the Midianite's telling his dream, Judg. vii. 13. while Gideon, unknown to him, was overhearing; or they are providentially led to ſuch a place, where ſuch a word ſuitable to their caſe is handled, Cant. iii. 3. The ſame particular providence appears often in the reading of the word, whether at family-worſhip, or in ſecret, or by ſome providential caſting of it in one's way *. I think it dangerous to make a fortune-book of the Bible, as ſome under temptation have opened the Bible, to know their caſe by the firſt word that ſhould caſt up to them. This is an unwarrantable and dangerous practice, though a merciful God may ſometimes condeſcend to outſhoot the devil in his own bow, as in the caſe of her who threw the glaſs at the wall, and it broke not. But when people are thus met in the way of their duty, or ſurpriſed, with a word ſuited to their caſe, the work of the Spirit is to be owned in it, as an accompliſhment of the promiſe, Iſ. xxx. 21. *Thine ears ſhall hear a word behind thee, ſaying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand,*

* Many inſtances of this are to be found in the author's own experience, in his Memoirs.

and

and when ye turn to the left. Certainly the Spirit gives inſtruction, reproof, invitations, to unbelievers this way; and much more helps the infirmities of his people the ſame way: for ſo the word is in its true uſe, 2 Tim. iii. 16. 17. *All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good works.* And this ſhould recommend the reading of the word of God in an ordinary.

I ſhall now make ſome ſhort improvement of this doctrine.

Use I. of information. This teaches us and ſhews,

1. That believers owe their ſpiritual ſtrength and comfort to the ſame hand that they owed their ſpiritual life to. As the mother who brought forth the child nurſes it with her own breaſts; ſo the Spirit, who is to the elect the Spirit of life to quicken them lying dead in ſin, is likewiſe the Comforter to ſtrengthen them under their infirmities when ſpiritually alive, John vi. 63. & xvi. 13. compare Pſal. cxxxviii. *ult.*

2. The Lord calls none of his people to any duty, but they may get it done acceptably, however difficult it is. For the help of his own Spirit is their allowance, Phil. iv. 13. *I can do all things through Chriſt which ſtrengtheneth me.* Here is the great difference betwixt thoſe under the law and under grace. The law or covenant of works exacts duty rigidly, but affords no help: the covenant of grace affords the promiſe of help with the command; for the latter is, but the former is not, *the miniſtration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8.

3. How that goſpel-paradox, 2 Cor. xii. 10. *When I am weak, then am I ſtrong*, is ſo often verified in the experience of the ſaints. Many a time when they are ſtrong and well buckled in all appearance for a work, it miſcarries: why, they do not go out of themſelves in a way of believing, and ſo the Spirit

withdraws. At other times they see themselves quite out of case and ability to manage such a work, and yet it succeeds: why, the Spirit comes in to their help, while they are sensible of need.

USE II. of reproof. It may reach a reproof,

1. To believers sometimes venturing on duties, more in confidence of their own abilities, than of the Spirit's help, as Peter did when he said, *Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended*, Matth. xxvi 33. This is the cause that the duty is marred; the bow so bended, cannot miss to break. It is sometimes marred as to the very getting it done, and always as to its acceptance with God.

2. To unbelievers, who neither have the Spirit, nor are careful to have him dwelling in them, and influencing them. Their best works are dead works, having nothing of the quickening and sanctifying Spirit in them; and they themselves are but natural men spiritually dead, Jude 19. Whatever flourish they make with their gifts in duties, their best duties will no more be accepted of God than carrion, or a beast that died of itself, would have been accepted on the altar.

3. To those who press on men still this and the other duty, without leading them to Jesus Christ for his Spirit and grace. This is *another gospel*, that will never make men holy, Gal. iii. 2. for it is not *the ministration of the Spirit*. And the same veil they cast over the Spirit and grace of Christ, they will always be found to cast over the corruption of man's nature too, that they may with some decency say to every man, *Physician, heal thyself*.

USE III. of exhortation. And, 1. To natural men void of the Spirit. Be concerned to get the Spirit first to quicken you, and then to assist and help you. Ye can do nothing acceptable to God in that state; and no wonder, for ye have not the gracious help of the Spirit, without which ye can have no access to God, Eph. ii. 18. So ye and your works are both dead carcases before him.

Therefore come to Christ in the way of believing; for

for the fulness of the Spirit is lodged in him to be communicated, Rev. iii. 1. So uniting with him, ye shall receive the Spirit. The fire that was set to the incense, was brought from the altar of burnt-offering. See John xx. 22. & Gen. ii. 7.

2. To believers. (1.) Let this comfort you under, and reconcile you to, the state of infirmities, wherewith ye are compassed, 2 Cor. xii. 9. 10. Though sinless infirmities are not to be desired, and sinful ones are much to be lamented; yet it is matter of rejoicing, that in these the Spirit gives sweet experience of his help.

(2.) Learn to look habitually for the help of the Spirit under your infirmities. While ye consider what ye have to do or bear, it is reasonable you cast one eye on your infirmity, but another eye upward for the Spirit's help. And by this means you will get his help, Luke xi. 13. *If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

DOCT. III. *Such is the weakness of God's own children, that they have not skill to manage even their addresses to God by prayer aright, without the Spirit. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.* They are like children putting their hand to a work, but with so little skill, that they must needs have one to stand over them, and direct them at every turn.

In discoursing from this point, I shall shew,

I. What is implied in this truth.

II. Wherein believers are ready, through their weakness, to mistake, go wrong, and mismanage in their prayers.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I shall shew what is implied in this truth. It implies,

1. That they are not of themselves able for what is to be done and borne in the Christian life, 2 Cor. iii. 5. So far from it, that they do not well know what is necessary for their help, what to seek of God for that end, and how to seek it. If a duty is to be done, a cross to be borne, they are at a loss there through weakness and infirmity; that sets them to their prayers: but then they are at a loss there again, they know not what, and how to ask.

2. That the children of God are all praying persons, Zech. xii. 10. If they can speak at all, they will speak to God by prayer: and even when they either cannot speak, or have no access to speak, if they have the exercise of judgement, they will pray in their hearts, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. So the habitual neglect of prayer is none of the spots of God's people. There is no child so unnatural, as to be still in his father's presence, and never to converse with him.

3. A gift of prayer, without the Spirit of prayer, cannot be sufficient to make one right prayer, that will be acceptable to God, John iv. 24. Gifts of prayer are bestowed on believers, as well as others: but still they know not what to pray for as they ought, without the Spirit prompting them. The prayer that is the mere exercise of a gift, may indeed be edifying to the hearers, but cannot be acceptable to God.

4. Nay, habitual grace is not sufficient for praying aright; for still there is a necessity of actual assistance from the Spirit, Psal. lxxx. 18. *Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.* Life is not sufficient for making a discourse to our prince; a man may have life, and yet not be able to speak a word: but some vigour and liveliness is necessary to such a purpose. So spiritual life never departs wholly from the believer, 1 John iii. 9. but it must be breathed on anew to fit him for praying, Cant. iv. *ult.* New influences are still necessary; hence is the promise, Is. xxvii. 3. *I will water it every moment.*

5. *Lastly*, Prayers are marred so far as the Spirit of

of God does not aſſiſt the party in them; they are marred ſo far in point of acceptance with God, Eph. ii. 18. As no prayer can be accepted but through Chriſt's interceſſion, ſo none will be offered to God by the Interceſſor farther than it is the product of the influence of his own Spirit. Nadab and Abihu's hearth-fire offered with the incenſe, was a coſtly leſſon of this, Lev. x. 1. 2. 3. So if, through the whole prayer, the Spirit's aſſiſtance is wanting, the whole will be unaccepted; if in any of it, that wherein it is wanting will be ſo.

II. The next head is to ſhew, wherein believers are ready, through their weakneſs, to miſtake, go wrong, and miſmanage in their prayers. They are ready to do ſo both in the matter and manner of them.

Firſt, In the matter of prayer, *We know not what to pray for.* Even the things to be prayed for, they are not ſo well verſed in them, but they are ready to go wrong therein. So that they need the Spirit's teaching, to tell them and make them take up their errand, when they are going and come to God in prayer; they need to be ſet right, and kept right in the very matter of prayer. Their weakneſs in this point appears, in that,

1. They are apt to pray againſt their own mercy. Thus did Job, chap vi. 8. 9. *O that I might have my requeſt! and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! even that it would pleaſe God to deſtroy me; that he would let looſe his hand, and cut me off.* When Satan was permitted to take all from him, there was an expreſs reſerve of his life as the greateſt mercy: but he prays very earneſtly againſt it, though no doubt at long-run Job bleſſed God from his heart that he did not hear him in that. We are ſo weak, that in God's diſpenſations many times we take our friends for our foes, and call what is for our good, evil, as Jacob did when he ſaid, *All theſe things are againſt me*, Gen. xlii. 36.

2. They are apt to ſeek what is not ſo good, as God has a mind to give them, 2 Cor. xii. 8. 9. *For this thing I beſought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he ſaid unto me, My grace is ſufficient for thee.* To be freed from the meſſenger of Satan was good, but to have God's grace poured in ſufficiently to maintain the combat, was better. And therefore Paul upon reflection takes God's way to have been better than what he himſelf propoſed, ver. 9. *Moſt gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Chriſt may reſt upon me.* Narrow aſking oft-times makes narrow receiving. It fares with believers ſometimes as with Joaſh, 2 Kings xiii. 18. 19. *Eliſha ſaid unto him, Take the arrows: and he took them. And he ſaid unto the king of Iſrael, Smite upon the ground: and he ſmote thrice, and ſtayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and ſaid, Thou ſhouldſt have ſmitten five or ſix times, then hadſt thou ſmitten Syria till thou haſt conſumed it: whereas now thou ſhalt ſmite Syria but thrice.* They are ſtraitened in their own bowels in aſking, and therefore they come not ſpeed.

3. They are apt to ſeek what would be for their hurt. So did Jonah, when he *wiſhed in himſelf to die, and ſaid, It is better for me to die than to live*, chap. iv. 8. It would have been very ill for Jonah to have died in ſuch a bad frame and temper of ſpirit, as he was then in. And if God had ſtruck him immediately, it is like he would immediately have changed his note. David prayed for the life of the child, 2 Sam. xii. 16. but God took it away, for it would have been a living blot upon him. As a fooliſh child ſeeks a knife to play with, which he can do nothing with, but hurt himſelf; ſo we are apt to ſeek from God, what in mercy he keeps from us.

4. They are apt to ſeek food for their corrupt luſts and affections, Matth. xx. 20. 21. *Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children, with her ſons, worſhipping him, and deſiring a certain thing of him. And he*

he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left in thy kingdom. James and John were tickled with a lust of ambition, and they seek honour to satisfy it. And it is God's goodness to his people in such a case, not to do with them, as he did with the lusting Israelites, Psal. cvi. 15. *He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.* Men may go wrong here, and not see their error, till the Lord correct it: for they may take lust for love, Luke ix. 54. 55. and so seek to feed their enemies whom they should starve.

5. They are apt, through ignorance or inadvertency, not to pray for what they really need for their case; as the children of Israel, when they *went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin?* Judg. xx. 18. To pray for God's presence with them, was not in their head: but that they really needed it, they afterwards felt to their cost. Many sad experiences praying people may have of this, which may shew the need of the Spirit's assistance. Hence general and formal prayers, little suited to the particular cases and exigences of the party; which is but trifling in so solemn and serious a matter as prayer to God.

6. Though they do know and advert to it before they go to prayer, they are ready to forget it in the time. There is a forgetting of particular petitions designed or coming of course, which is an effect of the Spirit's influence: in that case the forgotten petition is from one's own spirit, not from the Spirit of God; as in the instance of the prodigal son, Luke xv. what he designed to say to his father, ver. 19. *Make me as one of thy hired servants,* when he came to him he forgets, ver. 21. There is such a forgetting which is an effect of our own weakness: in that case the petition forgotten is from the Spirit of God, the forgetting it from ourselves, Heb. ii. 1. Thus going

to

to God sometimes, we forget much of our errand, whether by wandering of heart, or being left to ourselves in the matter. In a word,

7. *Lastly*, They are apt to pray for things not agreeable to the will of God, that there is neither precept nor promise for. The many petitions in which they are not heard evince this; because *if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*, 1 John v. 14. There is so much remains of corruption in the best, that it is hard even in our prayers to keep within the compass of what is agreeable to his will.

I shall now endeavour to assign the reasons why God's own children are so apt to mistake and go wrong even in the matter of prayer.

The great reason is, the remains of darkness that are on the minds of the best, while here, Job xxxvii. 19. *Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.* It is true, God's children are not in midnight-darkness, but their light is but a twilight, in which they are apt to mistake their way. And the more sensible they are of this, the more need they will find of the Spirit's help in prayer. More particularly, we know not what we should pray for, but are ready to go wrong in the matter of prayer,

1. Because we have at best but little knowledge of our own case: and no wonder that they who are not thoroughly acquainted with the nature of the disease, mistake as to the remedy. The blind man, Mark viii. 22.—25. is an emblem of the natural man, the true convert, and the glorified saint. The child of God while here *sees but in part*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Every believer is a mystery, Cant. iii. 6. a mystery to the world, a mystery to himself. There are many folds and plies in his case, which he himself cannot unfold; plies of grace, sin, temptation, danger, *&c.*

2. Little knowledge of what is good and best for us, Gen. xlii 36. We see, the weakness of understanding in children, makes them often to desire of parents

parents what really is not for them: even so it is with God's children, and therefore it is fatherly love that denies some of their petitions; as in the case of Job, Jonah, and others. We are apt to think that that is best for us that is most pleasant and most easy: but that is often a very deceitful rule.

3. Little acquaintance with the word, particularly the commands and the promises, the measure of our petitions. There is much need of the Spirit's help in that matter, John xiv. 26. We are ready to measure our petitions rather by our own inclinations, than by the word: and many read the Bible often, that have but very little skill of making a practical improvement thereof in their prayers, Mark x. 35. 37.

4 We are apt to take the subtile cravings of lust for the cravings of grace or innocent affection, Luke ix. 54. 55. And thence good people unwittingly are made intercessors for their spiritual enemies; which if they did discern, they would confess their error, and retract their request. Sin dwells in the believer together with grace, and that so closely, that the language of the one is often taken for that of the other.

5. Believers are liable to prejudices, and wrong notions of things, which they have drunk in from their education, manner of life in the world, *&c.* Such was the disciples notion of the temporal kingdom of Christ, that was the spring of that rash petition of James and John, Mark x. 37. *Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand in thy glory.* Such was that of the case of Gentiles among the believing Jews, that was the spring of the offence taken at Peter, Acts xi. 2. 3. *They that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.* An erring conscience will mislead men under pretence of divine authority, John xvi. 2. Acts xxvi. 9. No wonder then it form wrong requests in prayer, Luke ix. 54.

6. *Lastly*, They are subject to much confusion in prayer,

prayer, both through natural and ſpiritual indiſpoſition, Pſal. lxxvii. 4. Hence they are ready as Job did, chap. xxxviii. 2. to *darken counſel by words without knowledge.* The exerciſe of their very gift is not always ready at hand with them, far leſs the exerciſe of their grace. An influence of the Spirit is neceſſary, both for the one and the other. And when it is wanting, ſo that they are in no caſe for praying, no wonder they know not what to pray for.

Secondly, Believers are ready to go wrong in the manner of prayer: *We know not what we ſhould pray for* AS WE OUGHT. It is not in vain our Lord gave his diſciples a direction in that point, Matth. vi. 9. *After this manner pray ye*, &c. The prayer may be right as to the matter, that yet may be miſmanaged in the manner of performance, 1 Chron. xv. 13. And therefore there is need of the Spirit's help in this point too; not only to teach us what, but how to pray. Their weakneſs in this point appears, in that,

1. They are apt to ſlip the beſt ſeaſon for managing their addreſs before the throne. Thomas miſſed an opportunity of communion with Chriſt, that left him under the feet of unbelief, while the reſt were delivered from theirs, John xx. 24. 25. The beſt ſeaſon is, when the ſignal is given from heaven to the petitioner, to come forward: ſometimes the door is as it were caſt open to him, and there is a ſign given by ſome inward motion of the Spirit, or ſome providential call, moving him to come forward. The ſpouſe miſſed this, Cant. v. 2. 3. *I ſleep, but my heart waketh*, &c. and ſhe ſmarted for it, ver. 6. *I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn himſelf, and was gone: my ſoul failed when he ſpoke: I ſought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no anſwer.* Moſes was very careful to fall in with it immediately, Exod. xxxiv. 8. 9. *And Moſes made haſte, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worſhipped. And he ſaid, If now I have found grace in thy ſight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among ſt us (for it*

it is a ſtiff-necked people) and pardon our iniquity and our ſin, and take us for thine inheritance.

2. They are apt to enter on prayer with a temper of ſpirit very unfit for ſuch a holy exerciſe; being either entangled with worldly cares, or diſcompoſed with unruly paſſions, Luke xxi. 34. 1 Tim. ii. 8. They both make the ſpirit of a man, like troubled water, unfit to receive the image of the ſun, unfit for divine communications. Jonah's prayer behoved to be marred when he was in a fret. Therefore the apoſtle exhorts married perſons to take heed to their behaviour one towards another, that *their prayers might not be hindered*, 1 Pet. iii. 7. nothing being more apt to do it than domeſtic jars, Mal. ii. 13.

3. They are apt to be formal, lifeleſs, and coldrife in prayer, Cant. iii. 1. Rev. iii. 2. We are called to be *fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord.* But even where the fire of grace is in the hearth, unleſs it be blown up by the influence of the Spirit of God, the prayers will be miſmanaged, Pſal lxxx. 18. There will be bands of iniquity on the heart, which they will not be able to looſe, more than to diſſolve the ice with their breath: but *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the liberty.*

4. Their hearts are apt to wander in duty, and will do ſo if the Spirit fix them not. Therefore David prays, *Unite my heart to fear thy name*, Pſal. lxxxvi. 11. When Abraham had divided the carcaſes, the fowls came down on them: ſo when one is converſing with God, evil ſpirits will be at work, to caſt in ſomething that may divert him from the preſent duty, Rom. vii. 21. Many a prayer is loſt this way, while the heart ſteals away after ſome other thing than what it ſhould then be on.

5. They are apt to content themſelves with exerciſing their gift, without exerciſing their grace. Therefore Paul warns the Epheſians, chap. vi. 18. to *pray always with all prayer and ſupplication in the Spirit, and* to *watch thereunto with all perſeverance.* Hence many

many petitions, confeſſions, thankſgivings, all of them juſt; yet loſt, for want of ſuitable affections coming along with them. For it is the exerciſe of praying graces, reverence, faith, love, humility, *&c.* and not the exerciſe of praying gifts without them, that is pleaſing to God.

6. They are apt to diſproportion their concern to the weight of the matters they pray for. This is carefully guarded againſt in the Lord's prayer, Matth vi. 9. *&c.* where the glory of God has the firſt place, and there is but one petition for temporals, and two for ſpirituals. But how ready are we to be more concerned for our own intereſt, than for the honour of God; more fervent for temporal, than for ſpiritual mercies? This makes the prayers like the legs of the lame that are not equal, the affection being diſproportioned to the matter.

7. They are apt to be too peremptory in circumſtances, without leaving a due latitude to ſovereignty. That is limiting the holy One of Iſrael. This is often done as to time, the timing of mercies, in which we are too apt to take upon us to preſcribe to the ſovereign Manager, John ii. 3. 4. as to the manner of bringing about a mercy, which, ſhort-ſighted as we are, we are very ready to determine. And the ſame may be ſaid as to the meaſure of mercies.

8. They are apt to mix their own wild fire with the holy fire in prayer. So did the diſciples, Mark iv. 38. when they ſay, *Maſter, careſt thou not that we periſh?* The language of paſſion is ſometimes mixed with the language of grace in the prayers of ſaints; which when they diſcern, they will be ready to correct, Pſal. lxxvii. 7.—10. Hence there are expreſſions of ſaints unto God, recorded in ſcripture, not for our imitation, but for our warning of this corrupt bias of the heart, as Job xxx. 21. *Thou art become cruel to me: with thy ſtrong hand thou oppoſeſt thyſelf againſt me.* Jer. xv. 18. *Why is my pain perpetual? and my wound incurable, which refuſeth to be healed?*

healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail? These he looks on as the ravings of his sick children.

9. They are apt to lay too much weight of their acceptance in their prayers, on what will bear none of it. It is certain, that there is nothing will bear any weight of that, but the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, Rev. viii. 4. But the natural bias of the heart lies another way, to lay weight on the very performance of the duty, and the way how it is performed, as with such affection, pointedness, length, nay the very voice, as insignificant a thing as it is before the Lord. Hence our Lord cautions against *using vain repetitions* in prayer, *as the Heathen do: for they think* (says he) *that they shall be heard for their much speaking*, Matth. vi. 7. And that the Heathen laid much stress on a loud voice in prayer, appears from what Pharaoh says to Moses, Exod. ix. 28. *Heb. Make ye supplication to the Lord, and much*, i. e. Make much supplication. Compare 1 Kings xviii. 28. where it is said of Baal's prophets, that *they cried aloud.* There are remains of that legal bias in the hearts of God's own children, Matth. xix. 27. And it is only by the Spirit that saints are brought to lay their whole weight on Jesus Christ, Eph. ii. 18. Phil. iii. 3. Otherwise their deceitful hearts will be found disposed to slip aside that way, they being very ready to believe the acceptance of some fluent prayer of theirs, and hard to believe the acceptance of one that goes not so fluently though seriously; yet the blood of Jesus is still the same security.

10. *Lastly*, They are apt to faint and give over, upon the Lord's delaying to answer; whereas it is a chief piece of right management of business at the court of heaven, resolutely to insist and hang on, Luke xviii. 1. 8.* We are naturally hasty, and long

* See some excellent sermons of the author's on this subject in the first volume of Sermons and discourses, first published in 1753.

trials are apt to run us out of breath. There is need of much faith, that patience may have her perfect work: and that is not to be reached without the help of the Spirit, Rom. xv. 13.

I shall now give the reasons why believers are so apt to go wrong in the manner of prayer. They are the following.

1. Because of the sublimity of the work, that is so far above our reach, that we can by no means know how to manage it, but as we are taught by him with whom we have to do in it. To say a prayer in a formal uttering of words, is no such hard work indeed. But rightly to manage an address at the throne of heaven, on which sits the Sovereign Majesty; and that about the weightiest of all concerns; is such sublime work, that it passes the skill of the greatest orator on earth, to do it without the Spirit, Eccl. v. 1. 2. Were any of us to go on business to our earthly king, would we not need to be directed by some knowing the way of the court? How much more do we need direction from the Holy Spirit in our addresses to the throne of grace?

2. Because of the remains of corruption that yet hang about them, Rom. vii. 24. This is a clog at their heels at all times, and will not miss to exert itself in holy duties, ver. 21. *When I would do good, evil is present with me.* There is much darkness yet in the minds of the best, as to spiritual things: no wonder they know not how to pray as they ought. Much perverseness there is in the will, both with respect to God's precepts and providences. There is much carnality and disorder in the affections, as they all soundly feel, that are concerned to get the heart fit for praying, kept right in it, and kept right after it.

3. Because there is a subtile adversary busy to mar them in that their work, Zech. iii. 1. He well knows that all the hope in their case is from the divine help; and therefore while they are before the throne of mercy,

mercy, he will beſtir himſelf effectually to mar their application. He is an enemy to prayer, and therefore he will keep back from it if he can; if he cannot, he will do his utmoſt to mar it.

4. *Laſtly*, Becauſe of the weakneſs of grace in them. Grace diſpoſes men to pray, *Zech.* xii. 10. But the weakneſs of that grace leaves them in hazard of miſmanaging in it. Sometimes it is not in exerciſe; at beſt it is but weak, and mixed with corruption, in the ſtruggle with which it will be overcome, if the Spirit come not in to its help.

I ſhall now make ſome practical improvement.

This doctrine may be of uſe, both unto ſtrangers to God, and to his own children. And,

FIRST, Ye that are ſtrangers to God, yet in your natural ſtate, without the Spirit, and therefore children of Satan, we may take you up in theſe two ſorts to be ſpoke to, *viz.* prayerleſs natural perſons, and praying natural perſons.

Firſt, Prayerleſs natural unconverted perſons, ſuch as are living in the ſtate they were born in, and withal living without praying to the God that made them. I have two things to ſay to you from this doctrine.

1. Learn from it, that this prayerleſs life of yours declares your caſe a very ſad one. It declares you,

(1.) None of God's children; for whatever miſmanagements of it they fall into, they all practiſe the duty of prayer. So of you that is verified, Deut. xxxii. 5. *Their ſpot is not the ſpot of his children.* And if ſo, ye are the children of the devil, John viii. 44. of the family of hell. And his poſſeſſion of you remains undiſturbed to this day, ſince ye have never been ſo far awakened, as to ſet you to, and keep you at prayer.

(2.) Without the Spirit of God, Jude 19. And being without the Spirit, ye are ſpiritually dead in ſin; for ſo are all naturally, Eph. ii. 1. and it is *the Spirit* that *quickeneth*, John vi. 63. So that whoſo-

ever are without the Spirit are dead ſtill. You are then dead ſouls in living bodies. It is plain you are dead, for your ſpeech is laid, your ſenſes are gone, there is no moving nor breathing towards God in you, and the Spirit of life is departed from you.

2. Be exhorted from it to reform. And,

(1.) Set about prayer, 1 Theſſ. v. 17. Remember ye are God's creatures, and therefore obliged to worſhip him. Ye are men, and not beaſts, and therefore ſhould diſtinguiſh yourſelves from them by religion, Iſ. xlvi. 8. Ye have ſouls that will not die, and therefore ye ſhould be concerned to pray for them, that ye live not in eternal miſery.

(2.) Be concerned to partake of the Spirit, and come to Chriſt for that end, who *hath the ſeven Spirits of God*, Rev. iii. 1. Ye ſay ye cannot pray. If the Spirit of Chriſt were in you, it would not be ſo, Zech. xii. 10. Gal. iv. 6. Ye ſay, ye have no time for prayer, or ye have no place to pray in. If the Spirit of Chriſt were in you, ye would have a heart to pray; and if ye had the heart for it, ye would find both time and place.

Secondly, Praying natural unconverted perſons. People may be praying perſons, and yet in the gall of bitterneſs, and none of God's children: praying perſons, and yet profane, Iſ. i. 15. 16. formal hypocrites, Matth. xxiii. 14. 27. 28. They may have a gift of prayer, that are void of the Spirit and grace of prayer. To ſuch I would ſay from this doctrine, Then,

1. Certainly ye can pray none at all aright; an evidence of which is, All your prayers are rejected of God, Prov. xv. 8. John ix. 31. If God's own children cannot pray aright without the Spirit, how is it poſſible ye ſhould do ſo, who neither have the Spirit, nor yet are children of God? If the weak man cannot go without help, ſure the man void of life cannot move at all. View your own caſe in the caſe of the true ſaint, and think, if it be ſo in the green tree, what muſt it be in the dry. They are God's children,

children, yet cannot pray aright to their Father without the Spirit: how much leſs can ye who are none of his family, and therefore never have the Spirit? They always have the Spirit dwelling in them as a Spirit of life, yet cannot pray aright without actual influence from him: how then can ye ever pray aright, who are ſo far from his actual influence, that he is not ſo much as in you, ſince ye are not in Chriſt? Hence,

(1.) Your praying, though continued never ſo many years, without coming to Chriſt by faith, is but like ſo many ciphers, which being without a figure at their head, the value is juſt nought. There is never one right or acceptable prayer among them all, Heb. xi. 6. They are all loſt labour. And ſuch a life of duties is but a wandering in the wilderneſs of duties, like Iſrael's wandering forty years in the wilderneſs, where they died at length, and never entered Canaan.

(2.) All your prayers are *turned to ſin*, Pſal. cix. 7. If ye have never prayed aright, ye have always prayed wrong, ſpilled and marred that duty, profaned that holy ordinance. And ſo what ye reckon ſo much praying to God, God will reckon ſo much taking of his name in vain, for which he will not hold you guiltleſs. Wherefore let praying perſons look well to their ſtate.

2. Think not much of your gifts of prayer, for a gift of prayer will go ſhort way before God. If it were never ſuch a ready, full, and taking gift, it cannot make a man pray one petition aright without the Spirit, John iv. 24. Yet how are men puffed up with ſuch a gift, that have it, and have not grace to keep them humble under it? They think themſelves ſomething on the account of their gift, while God knows they are nothing, as being without the Spirit; for they ſee wherein they excel others, but ſee not wherein they come ſhort of true prayer in the ſight of God, Gal. vi. 3. 4. I have four things to ſay of a gift of prayer, without the Spirit of prayer.

(1.) It is a *good gift* of God indeed, Jam. i. 17. But it is but a left-hand gift, which may be loſt and taken away again from him that has it now, Zech. xi. *ult. Wo to the idol ſhepherd that leaveth the flock: the ſword ſhall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm ſhall be clean dried up, and his right eye ſhall be utterly darkened;* compared with John x. 12. for the prophecy relates to the ſcribes and Phariſees. It is of that ſort that is common to Chriſt's ſheep and the devil's goats. The Spirit of prayer is a grace-gift, a right hand gift, which can never be quite loſt, Rom. xi. 29. *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

(2.) It may be uſeful to others for the profit of their ſouls, but in that reſpect it is uſeleſs to yourſelves, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. 2. 3. Others may have communion with God in your exerciſe of your gift, but you yourſelf can have none, Prov. xv. 8. Gifts are beſtowed on hypocrites for the good and behoof of the ſaints, as the purſe-bearer to a young prince gets his purſe filled, to anſwer the needs of the prince, 1 Cor. iii. 21. 22. 23. The raven, though an unclean creature, was employed to feed Elijah. The gift the carpenters had that built the ark, was of uſe to the ſaving of Noah and his family, but they themſelves periſhed in the deluge, for all their ſkill of ark-building.

(3.) It cannot but be hurtful to your own ſouls; which hurtfulneſs is not from the good gift itſelf, but from the light and fooliſh heart it is lodged in, Prov. i 32. The very goſpel, 2 Cor. ii. 16. is hurtful that way; yea Chriſt himſelf is a ſtumbling-block by that means. A man with a gift of prayer, without the Spirit, is like a ſhip without ballaſt; the more ſail ſhe has, ſhe is in the greater danger of being overwhelmed.

(4.) You may periſh for ever, for all that gift. Judas had a gift of praying doubtleſs given him with the gift of preaching; yet for all it he fell from his miniſtry,

miniſtry, and is gone to his own place, Acts i. 25. The light of a gift without the warmth of the Spirit of grace, ſerves to ſhew the way to outer darkneſs. And ſuch a gift will aggravate the condemnation of the poſſeſſor, being like a bag of gold on a drowning man, that makes him only to ſink the ſooner and the deeper.

3. *Laſtly*, Come forward then another ſtep in religion, and be concerned for a higher attainment in it, than ye have yet reached. Ye have come the length of praying, that is good, but it is not all: if ye ſtick there, ye periſh: Come forward to Chriſt, out of all confidence in your prayers, by believing uniting with the Son of God. Ye have attained to the gift of prayer: come forward till ye reach the Spirit of prayer, which Chriſt communicates to all his members, John i. 12. with Gal. iv. 6.

SECONDLY, Ye that are God's own children, to you I would ſay,

1. Surely many a miſmanaged prayer hath gone through your mouths, ſo that ye may ſay, *We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteouſneſſes are as filthy rags*, Iſ. lxiv. 6. So much prayer as has been made by you without the Spirit, ſo much miſmanaged unacceptable prayer has there been, for which ye need pardon. Ye may here view,

(1.) The many prayers of yours, that have been the mere lifeleſs exerciſe of a gift, without the Spirit from the beginning of them to the end. All which have been loſt prayers by the lump. Since ye were acquainted with Chriſt, ye have kept a conſtant courſe of praying daily: but at this rate it will be found there have been many days, and perhaps weeks and months, wherein ye have prayed none at all aright and acceptably. So that if ye ſeek your prayers in heaven, which ye think ye have ſent thither, it will be found that many of them never came there; they wanted the wings of the Spirit's influences, and ſo fell upon the earth, and are loſt.

(2.) The

(2.) The many parts of ſome of your prayers, and ſome parts of the beſt of them, that have been the mere product of your own ſpirits, and not of the Spirit of God. How much of the prayer has been over many times, ere your lips have been touched with the live-coal? And perhaps ere ye have done, ye have quenched the coal, provoked the Spirit to depart And when it has been beſt with you, the deceitful heart has made a ſinful mixture in it. At this rate ſeeking many a long prayer before the throne, ye would find that but a ſhort part of it came thither; perhaps but a few ſentences. For alas! the ſkin and dung of our ſacrifices are often more bulk, than the fleſh that comes on the altar.

2. Be humbled under a ſenſe of your miſmanagements in the prayers ye have prayed all along to this day; *for in many things we offend all*, Jam. iii. 2. See the need ye have of the blood of Chriſt to purge away the guilt of your prayers, and apply it by faith for that end, Rev. vii. 14. Lament the too little concern ye have had to get the Spirit's help to your praying, and ſee for the pardon thereof.

3. *Laſtly*, Learn that praying is a more ſolemn ſerious work than it is generally looked on to be; and that it is not ſuch an eaſy thing to pray to purpoſe, as we are apt to imagine. Take theſe three warnings then.

(1.) Truſt not to your gift of prayer, neither be vain of it, Prov. iii. 5. 1 Cor. i *ult.* Oh! it is ſad to think of that vanity, and airineſs, and ſelf ſeeking that is to be found in ſome people's exerciſe of their praying gift. It is an argument that the perſon forgets both God and himſelf. And nothing can be more contrary to the help of the Spirit in prayer. The heart is deceitful in this point, and we have need to watch it.

(2.) Truſt not to your frame. One may have a good frame before he go to prayer, and yet when he comes to the work, may not find his hands; hence often

often leaſt is got when moſt is expected; becauſe it is expected rather on what we have, than what we look for from the Spirit. A perſon may have a good frame in prayer, that may quickly leave him; the wheels of the ſoul in ſwift motion, may ſuddenly ſtop, 2 Tim. ii. 1. Prov. xxviii. 26.

(3.) When ye go to prayer, be impreſſed with a ſenſe of your inability to manage it aright, Joſh. xxiv. 19. and then, and all along in prayer, lay yourſelves open, and look for the help of the Spirit. Lay the ſacrifice on the altar, and look to the Lord for fire from heaven to conſume it, as Elijah did, 1 Kings xviii. 33. 37. 38. The Spirit is that fire.

I proceed to another doctrine from the text.

Doct. IV. *All our praying aright is ſo far done by the help of the Spirit, that it is juſtly reckoned his work, his making interceſſion for us.*

In handling this point, I ſhall ſhew,

I. What is to be underſtood by praying aright.

II. That all our praying aright is done by the help of the Spirit.

III. In what reſpects our praying aright is ſo far done by the help of the Spirit, that it is juſtly reckoned his work.

IV. What is the Spirit's work in our praying aright, or what his making interceſſion for us is.

V. *Laſtly*, Apply the whole.

I. I am to ſhew what is to be underſtood by praying aright.

Negatively, 1. It is not praying aright in a legal ſenſe, without any imperfection in the eye of the law, attending the prayer. There was never a prayer in the world, of that ſort, ſince Adam's fall, except the prayers of the man Chriſt. The beſt prayers of the beſt ſaints have always been attended with blemiſhes viſible

viſible to the eyes of God, though not to ours, Iſ. lxiv. 6. Such praying is our duty indeed, Matth. v. *ult.* but the attainment of none in this life, by any meaſure of grace to be expected, Phil. iii. 12.

2. It is not praying aright in a moral ſenſe, wherein the moſt rigid hearer can diſcern nothing contrary to the precepts of morality. A prayer may be ſo far right, as no unlawful thing may be prayed for in it, and yet be naught, Luke xviii. 11. The matter may be very good, where the manner of praying ſpoils all. If that were enough, the book-prayers of formaliſts would be ſufficient help in ſome caſes to pray aright.

3. It is not praying aright in a rhetorical ſenſe, a well-worded prayer, with a ſuitable delivery. Words, voice, and geſture, are of little moment before God, 1 Sam. xvi. 7 1 Cor. ii. 4. It may be a right prayer, where the expreſſion is far from being polite, where ſentences are broken off before they make a complete ſenſe, as in Pſal. vi. 3. *My ſoul is alſo ſore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long?* The Lord himſelf knows what is the mind of the Spirit, though the words do not fully expreſs it. And where all theſe things are accurate and exact, the prayer may be all wrong before God: where there is not a wrong word, there may not be one right affection.

Poſitively, It is praying aright in an evangelical ſenſe, ſo that in the eye of the goſpel it paſſes as acceptable prayer before the throne. This implies two things.

1. Sincerity in prayer, 1 Chron. xxix. 17. in oppoſition to formality and hypocriſy, 2 Tim. iii. 5. Pſal. xvii. 1. The righteous God loveth uprightneſs of heart in duty, Prov. xv. 8; and though there may be many blemiſhes in the duty, where the man is ſincere in it, the Lord will regard it, notwithſtanding of theſe blemiſhes. Hereby the heart is really for God as the chief good, and goes along with the tongue in prayer.

2. A

2. A perfection of parts in prayer, though not of degrees. That is to ſay, Praying aright is,

(1.) Praying for things agreeable to God's will revealed in his word of command or promiſe, 1 John v. 14. Nothing can make praying for things without the compaſs of the command and promiſe, to be praying aright. For there faith has nothing to bottom itſelf upon; and *without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God*, Heb. xi. 6.

(2.) Praying in a right manner in a goſpel-ſenſe, Jer. xxix. 13. *Ye ſhall ſeek me, and find me, when ye ſhall ſearch for me with all your heart.* Hereunto are required praying graces and affections in exerciſe, as faith, fervency, humility, reverence, and the like. Theſe are the ſoul and life of prayer; whereas the expreſſions of the lips are but the body of it. Where theſe are wanting, the duty will be reckoned but *bodily exerciſe*, 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Such praying is right in ſo far as it is acceptable in the ſight of God, *i. e.* capable of being accepted according to the rule of the goſpel. It is a ſacrifice fit to be laid on God's altar; a prayer which may be put in the Mediator's hand, that through his interceſſion it may be actually accepted. For it is not any thing in our prayers themſelves for which they are accepted, but only the interceſſion of Chriſt, for the beſt things in them are mixed with ſin. Only ſuch prayers are fit to be put in the Mediator's hands, and he will take them off the ſinner's hand to preſent them to the Father, and the Father will accept them at his hand: whereas other ſorts of prayer, wherein the petitioner is not ſincere, or where they are wrong as to the matter of them, or are not made in the right manner, they cannot come into the Mediator's hand, he will never preſent them for acceptance; and ſo it is impoſſible they can be accepted.

Hence it is evident, that none who are out of Chriſt, unregenerate, unconverted, can at all pray aright, or pray as they ought. For what ſince-

rity can be there, where converting grace has never touched? What faith, fervency, or humility, can be exercised by unbelievers dead in sin, whose stony heart is not yet removed? Therefore the form of prayer, Matth. vi. begins, *Our Father*, &c. shewing that none can pray aright or acceptably but God's own children, or those who have an interest in him as their Father; and it is the Spirit that teaches them so, Gal. iv. 6.

II. I am next to shew, that all our praying aright is done by the help of the Spirit. This is to be understood as comprehending these two things.

1. It is done by the help of the Spirit indwelling in us, Gal. iv 6. Ye are not to think that the Spirit as an external agent helps us to pray aright: nay but the Spirit helping to pray is, as a Spirit of life, dwelling in the man as a member of Christ, 1 John ii. 27. So that till we have the Spirit dwelling in us, we can never pray aright.

2. It is done by the help of the indwelling Spirit actually influencing us, Gal. iv. 6. *crying*, *Abba*, *Father*, i. e. so influencing us as to make us cry. Even the indwelling of the Spirit is not enough for that effect: but there is requisite an agency of the Spirit in us, whereby we may be acted in prayer; which is called *the blowing of the wind*, John iii. 8. Cant. iv. *ult.*

Now that all our praying aright is done by the help of the Spirit indwelling and influencing, is clear,

1. From scripture-testimony. The Spirit is the author of our whole sanctification, whereof praying aright is a part, 2 Thess. ii. 13. particularly, of all our acceptable worship, Phil. iii. 3. It is by him we have access to God in worship, Eph. ii. 18. And prayer by name, if of the right sort, is owing to his help, Eph. vi. 18. and that as an indwelling Spirit, a Spirit of adoption, Rom. viii. 15. with Gal. iv. 6. and an influencing Spirit, 1 Thess. v. 17. 18. 19.

2. We

2. We are ſpiritually dead without the Spirit indwelling, and ſpiritually aſleep without the Spirit influencing, Eph. ii. 1. Cant. v. 2. Neither a dead man, nor a ſleeping man, is fit to preſent a ſupplication to the king: ſo neither is a dead ſinner, nor a ſleeping ſaint, capable to pray aright. The former, praying, is like a ghoſt walking and talking; the latter, like a man ſpeaking through his ſleep. It is the Spirit that quickens the dead ſoul, John vi. 63. who coming to dwell in the heart makes the firſt reſurrection: and it is he alſo who awakens the ſleeping ſaint, Cant. v. 4.

3. There is no praying aright without ſanctifying grace, nor without that grace in exerciſe, John ix. 31. Cant. iii. 1. Where ſanctifying grace is not, the filth and pollution of ſin remains, and defiles all, Tit. i. 15. So that ſuch a man's praying is like the opening of an unripe grave, Rom. iii. 13. Accordingly the praying Phariſees are called *whited ſepulchres*, Matth. xxiii. 27. Where grace is not in exerciſe, there is incenſe indeed, but no pillar of ſmoke aſcending from it to heaven; ſpikenard indeed, but no ſmell thereof. Now it is the indwelling Spirit that works ſanctifying grace, 2 Theſſ. ii. 13. puts that grace in exerciſe, Cant. iv. 16. and ſo fits men to pray, Zech. xii. 10.

4. *Laſtly*, To praying aright is required light and warmth, a light of the mind, and warmth of affections; the former for the matter, the latter for the manner. And it is a falſe light and warmth that makes ſome natural men think, that ſometimes they pray aright, Iſ. lviii. 2. But all genuine light, and vital warmth, comes from the Spirit, Eph. i. 17. 18. 2 Tim. i. 7. Hence the emblem of the virtue of the Holy Spirit was *cloven tongues, like as of fire*, Acts ii. 3. 4. And the effect thereof is ſomeway compared with that of drunkenneſs, (which excuſes it no more, than Chriſt's being compared to a thief excuſes ſtealing, Rev. xvi. 15.); for as the liquor being received to

exceſs, influences the man, ſo that things come in his head which otherwiſe would not, and the affections and paſſions are wrought up by it, Prov. xxiii. 33. ſo the Spirit indwelling and influencing, preſents to the mind matter of prayer, and works up the affections ſuitable thereto, Eph. v. 18. 19. Cant. vii. 9.

III. I ſhall ſhew in what reſpects our praying aright is ſo far done by the help of the Spirit, that it is juſtly reckoned his work. That it is ſo reckoned in ſcripture, is evident from the text, where his *interceding for us with groanings*, cannot be underſtood of himſelf as the ſubject, but of us, according to the analogy of faith. It is plain alſo from Gal. iv. 6. *Becauſe ye are ſons, God hath ſent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* Now the Spirit's crying, *Abba, Father*, is meant certainly of our crying ſo, by the help of the Spirit, not of a crying whereof the Spirit is the ſubject; for God is not the Father of the Spirit, becauſe it is the ſecond perſon, and not the third, who is the Son of God; and Father and Son are the relatives. And thus the apoſtle explains it, Rom. viii. 15. *Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* Now the reaſons of this are,

1. Becauſe all that is right in our prayers is from the Spirit, and all that is wrong in them from ourſelves, either as to matter or manner, 1 Cor. xii. 11. 1 Pet. i. 22. with 2 Cor iii. 5. In the incenſe of our prayers there is ſmoke that goes up towards heaven, aſhes that remain behind on the earth; it is the fire from the altar that ſends up the ſmoke, it is the earthly nature of the incenſe that occaſions the aſhes. The fleſh of any ſuch ſpiritual ſacrifice is wholly owing to the Spirit, the ſkin and dung is our own, and ours only. Therefore all our right praying is juſtly reckoned the Spirit's work.

2. None pray aright but as they are members of Chriſt, and children of God, Gal. iv. 6. Rom. viii. 15.

15. John xv. 5. Now it is the Holy Spirit of the Head that dwells in and actuates all the members acting as members, 1 Cor. xii. 11. 12. Therefore as the soul sees by the eye, and hears by the ear; so whatsoever the members of Christ do aright as members, is justly ascribed to the Spirit that actuates the mystical body, and is the Spirit of adoption. But there may be a defect in seeing by the eye, and hearing by the ear: these are not to be ascribed to the soul, but to some disease in the eye or ear: So whatever defects may be in the members of Christ, these are not to be ascribed to the Spirit, but to the remains of corruption with them, and their state of imperfection while here.

3. The Spirit is the principal cause of our praying aright, we are but the instrumental causes of it. The act of praying in heart and expression is done by us: but the grace, ability, frame for prayer, and the exciting and bringing forth into exercise that grace and ability, is from the Spirit, Phil. ii. 12 13. Hence prayer is said to be *inwrought* in us, Jam. v. 16. If the wind blow not, the spices send not forth their pleasant smell, Cant. iv. 16. As the sound of the horn ceases as soon as one ceases to wind it; so does our praying aright on the withdrawing of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 5.

4. *Lastly*, All our praying graces, as all others, are in their exercise the product of the Spirit, and his work in us, Gal. v. 22. 23. There is a root and stock of grace in the believer, implanted and preserved by the Spirit, 1 John iii. 9. In prayer these are brought forth into exercise, the man acts faith, love, &c. and therein the soul of prayer lies: but look on them as they are so brought forth from the stock, and they are the fruit of the Spirit, though the believer is the tree they hang on. For the Spirit is the vital fructifying sap of the trees of righteousness, Is. xliv. 3. 4. Thus the holy lustings, longings, and desires of a believer against sin, are called *the Spirit's lusting*,

Gal. v. 17. (compare ver. 16. 18.) in the same sense as the groanings in our text. See 1 John iv. 4.

Object. If our praying aright is the work of the Spirit, what need have we of the intercession of Christ, for the acceptance of our prayers? Surely the Spirit needs no intercessor betwixt him and the Father. *Anf.* Though it is the Spirit's work, it is not his work separately by himself without us; but it is his work in us, and so our work too, Gal. iv. 6. with Rom. viii. 15. And so far as it is done by us, we groaning, lusting, crying in prayer, every thing has a sinful mixture from us at best: so there is need of Christ's intercession still. The water comes pure from the fountain, the Spirit; but running through a muddy channel, such as every saint here is, it cannot be accepted in heaven, but as purified and sweetened by the intercession of Christ.

IV. I come now to consider, what is the Spirit's work in our praying aright, or what his making intercession for us is. And here I shall shew,

1. The difference betwixt Christ's intercession and the Spirit's.

2. The help of the Spirit in prayer.

FIRST, I am to shew what is the difference betwixt Christ's intercession and the Spirit's.

1. Christ intercedes for us in heaven at the Father's right hand, Rom. viii. 34. The Spirit intercedes in our hearts, upon earth, Gal. iv. 6. We have no intercession made for us in heaven, but by Christ the only Intercessor there.

2. Christ's intercession is a mediatory intercession, wherein he mediates or goes between God and us; an office peculiar to him alone, 1 Tim. ii. 5. But the Spirit's intercession is an auxiliary intercession to us, whereby he helps us to go to God in a right manner, prompting us to intercede for ourselves aright.

3. The Spirit's intercession is the fruit of Christ's intercession, and what is done by the sinner through the

the Spirit's intercession, is accepted of God through the intercession of Christ. Christ by his death purchased the Spirit for his people, and through his intercession the Spirit is sent into their hearts, where he helps them to pray for themselves: and these prayers are accepted of God by means of the Mediator's intercession, John xiv. 16. & xvi. 7. 13. Rev. viii. 4. In a word,

The difference is such as is between one who draws a poor man's petition for him, and another who presents it to the king, and gets it granted. The Spirit does the former, and Christ does the latter, for us.

SECONDLY, I shall consider the help of the Spirit in prayer, which is his making intercession for us, in the style of the scripture. We shall view this work of the Spirit, more generally, and more particularly.

FIRST, More generally, and that in two things. He acts in it,

1. As a teaching Spirit, John xiv. 26. It is our infirmity in point of prayer, *We know not what we should pray for as we ought.* He enlightens our minds, and helps our ignorance as to the matter and manner of prayer, 1 John ii. 27. He is the great Teacher of the church, and none teacheth like him. He will teach them who are so weak that no other can teach them; so that hearing some of God's weak children pray, one must needs say, *This is the finger of God.*

2. As a quickening Spirit, Psal. lxxx. 18. Therefore the Spirit is compared to fire, which gives both light and heat. He removes spiritual deadness, and stirs up praying graces in the heart; whence his influences are compared to the blowing of the wind, that puts things that were at rest in motion. Thus he is said to *make intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered,* setting the gracious heart a labouring and working towards God, with the utmost earnestness, as one groaning.

SECONDLY, More particularly, the work of the Spirit in our prayers lies here.

First, He excites us to pray, Rom. viii. 15. *Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* He prompteth us to go to the throne of grace, who otherwise would be negligent of it, and backward to it, Cant. v. 2. 3. 4. *I sleep, but my heart waketh*, &c. *My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.* Thus he leads us to God (Eph. ii. 18. *Gr.*) as an internal moving principle. This lies in two things.

1. He impresses our spirits with a sense of a divine call to it, and so binds it on our consciences as duty to God, Psal. xxvii. 8. *Heb. My heart said unto thee, Let my face seek thy face, when thou saidst, Seek ye my face.* Thus he applies the general command for praying to particular times, that the man is made in effect to say, Now God is calling me to this duty: and so he sees he cannot slight it without disobedience, but must go to it from conscience of duty. This cuts off the low motives to prayer, of custom, credit, regard to the commands of men, *&c.*

2. He disposes our hearts for it, inclines us to the duty, that we willingly comply with it. *When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek*, Psal. xxvii. 8. Men may have a sense of the command on them, who, for want of a disposition to the duty commanded, either neglect the command, or else are but dragged to obey it. But the Spirit powerfully inclines the will to the duty, so that the man obeys out of choice, Psal. cx. 3. Cant. vi. 12. This cuts off the low motives of fear of man, and slavish fear of God too, which move many.

Secondly, He gives us a view of God as a gracious and merciful Father in Christ, Gal. iv. 6. Without this there can be no acceptable prayer. Where there is no spiritual view of God at all in prayer, we worship we know not what. Where we view him as an absolute God out of Christ, we may be filled with terror of him, but can have no true confidence in him. But by the Spirit viewing him in Christ, we have at once

once the ſight of majeſty and mercy. And hereby he works in us,

1. A holy reverence of God, to whom we pray, which is neceſſary in acceptable prayer, Heb. xii. 28. By this view he ſtrikes us with a holy dread and awe of the majeſty of God, whereby is baniſhed that lightneſs and vanity of heart, that makes ſuch ſlanting in the prayers of ſome, as if they were ſet down on their knees to ſhew their gift, and commend themſelves.

2. A holy confidence in him, Eph. iii. 12. *Abba, Father*, ſpeaks both reverence and confidence, whereof the Spirit is the author, Rom. viii. 15. This confidence reſpects both his ability and willingneſs to help us, Matth. vii. 11. Without this there can be no acceptable prayer, Heb. xi. 6. Jam. i. 6. This is it that makes prayer an eaſe to a troubled heart, the Spirit exciting in us holy confidence in God as a Father. Hence the ſoul, though not preſently eaſed, draws theſe concluſions. (1.) He deſigns my good by all the hardſhips I am under, Rom. viii. 28. (2.) He pities me under them, Pſal. ciii. 13. (3.) He knows the beſt time for removing them, and will do it, when that comes, 1 Sam. ii. 3.

Hereby is cut off that unbelieving formality, whereby ſome expect nothing by prayer, and get as little; as alſo the deſpondency, wherewith others are ſtruck, from the ſenſe of God's juſtice, and their own ſinfulneſs.

Thirdly, He gives us a view of ourſelves in our own ſinfulneſs and unworthineſs, John xvi. 8. This always accompanies the view the Spirit gives of God, Iſ. vi. 5. *Wo is me, for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midſt of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord of hoſts.* We are very ready to become ſtrangers to ourſelves, and to loſe ſight of our ſinfulneſs. But the Spirit of prayer, according to the meaſure of his influence, opens out the man before his own eyes, caſts

casts abroad the many foul plies of his heart and life, Luke xviii. 13. Is. lxiv. 6. Hereby he works in us,

1 Humiliation of heart before the Lord, fills us with low thoughts of ourselves before him, Gen. xviii. 27. makes us see ourselves unworthy of the mercies, that either we have got, or desire to have, Gen. xxxii. 10. fills us with holy shame, and self-loathing, Luke xviii. 13. Ezek. xxxvi. 31. This fits us for the receipt of mercies of free grace; and the want of it makes sinners to be in their prayers, as if they came to buy of God, and not to beg, and so to be sent empty away.

2. Cordial confession, that comes away natively from seen and felt sinfulness, Psal. lxii. 8. Thus the influence of the Spirit in prayer causes full and free confession of sin with the mouth, to the honour of God, and our own shame. And the things thus being impressed on the heart, there follow natively words to express them by; and where they fail, groans do well compensate them before the throne. This cuts off the formal, hale-hearted confessions of sin, wherewith prayers are often vitiated.

3. Hearty thanksgiving for mercies received, Psal. cxvi. 11. 12. Hereby the smallest mercies appear very big; and the sinner, that wondered at other times, how he came not to get more mercies, begins to wonder he has any at all left him, Lam. iii. 22. But without a discovery of our sinfulness by the Spirit, all our thanksgivings for mercies are but empty compliment, like the Pharisee's, Luke xviii. 11.

4. A high value for the Mediator and his righteousness, which lies out of the view of the unhumbled heart, Phil. iii. 9. As the stars are best seen from the bottom of a deep and narrow pit, so Christ crucified is best discovered in his excellency and suitableness, by the humbled soul. The lower the soul is in its own eyes, the higher will the Mediator be in its eyes; and the higher the Mediator is, the more fit one is to pray.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, He gives us a view of our wants, and the need we have of the ſupply of them, Luke xv. 17. This may be ſeen, comparing the Phariſee's and publican's prayers, Luke xviii. 11. 12. 13. The Spirit taught the one, and not the other. The want of this mars prayer, Luke i. 53. *He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath ſent empty away.* Here he acts,

1. As an enlightener, opening the eyes of the mind, to diſcern the wants and needs we are compaſſed with, Eph. i. 17. 18. The Spirit's ſhining in on the ſoul, as the ſun on a moth-eaten garment holden up betwixt us and it, the ſoul gets a broad ſight of its wants; whence it is made to ſay, as Iſ. lxiv. 6. *We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteouſneſſes are as filthy rags.* Luke xviii. 13. *God be merciful to me a ſinner.* Pſal. xix. 12. *Who can underſtand his errors?* This the Spirit doth by opening up the law in its ſpirituality, and giving us a view of our own circumſtances in a preſent evil enſnaring world.

2. As a remembrancer, bringing ſeaſonably to mind the wants we have, or might have adverted to, John xiv. 26. To every thing there is a ſeaſon: but oftimes in the ſeaſon of getting ſupply at the throne of grace, our wants and needs eſcape us, they come not in mind, till the market is over. The Spirit is a remembrancer in this caſe, ſeaſonably ſuggeſting to us our needs for ourſelves or others. So he ſets things before us in time of prayer.

3. As a forewarner of what we may need, John xvi. 13. So we find Job not only offering ſacrifice with a view to what he could not know, chap. i. 5. but alſo poſſeſſed with a fear of a trial before it came, chap. iii. 25. Thus men are led to lay up for what they may meet with, and in prayer to have a view to the grace that may be needful in ſuch and ſuch emergents. Hereby he helps us,

(1.) To matter of prayer, ſets before us things to be

be prayed for. Where the Spirit is thus at work in the soul, persons will be taught to pray, and it will supply the want of a form: and therefore they that sooth themselves with that, they cannot pray, do but bewray themselves to be void of the Spirit of God.

(2.) To the right manner of praying: for hereby he,

[1.] Impresses us with a sense of need, that we are made to pray feelingly, that the tongue does but express what the heart feels, Luke xv. 17. 18. 19. Insensibleness of our needs makes us formal in prayer, and therefore to be sent empty away. A mere rational sight of our wants will not cure it; but the light of the Spirit is the light of life, John viii. 12. that will not miss to affect the heart.

[2.] Hereby we are rendered sincere in our addresses to God, Psal. xvii. 1. Feigned lips in prayer proceed from a dark and insensible heart. He that really sees his disease, and is persuaded of the need of the Physician, there is no doubt of his being in earnest for his help.

[3.] Hereby we are made importunate in prayer. Necessity has no law, and hunger breaks through stone-walls, as we see in the woman of Canaan, who did hang on, over the belly of discouragement, and would take no refusal. Importunate praying is prevailing, Luke xi. 8. and felt need that one cannot bear without relief, makes importunity.

[4.] Hereby we are made particular in prayer, laying our hand on our sores, and laying out our particular wants before the Lord, Luke xviii. 41. General prayers, like general preaching, have little of the Spirit in them. They that go where help is to be found, being indeed pinched, will readily tell where they are pinched.

Fifthly, He gives us a view of the grace and promises of the covenant, Psal. xxv. 14. John xiv. 26. Without this the sinner pressed with a sense of need, has nothing to support him, and therefore cannot pray in faith. Our Lord Jesus Christ has purchased all

all the grace and promiſes of the covenant for his people, and there is enough there for all they can need. It is the office of the Spirit to open them out before their eyes, and apply them. And here the Spirit,

1. Brings to their remembrance the grace and promiſes ſuited to their caſe, Gen. xxxii. 11. 12. The promiſes are the rule and encouragement of prayer; but while they lie out of our ſight, we can neither have ſuitable direction nor encouragement from them: but when the Spirit draws near with the promiſe to us, there is help at hand in prayer.

2. He unfolds that grace and theſe promiſes, cauſing to underſtand them in a ſpiritual and ſaving manner, 1 Cor. ii. 12. The letter of the promiſe can only help to words in prayer; but the Spirit ſhining on the promiſe, will help to pray in a gracious manner; for the demonſtration of the Spirit is always with power. Hereby,

(1.) The Spirit teaches what to pray for, according to the will of God. While the promiſes rightly underſtood regulate our prayers, and they are agreeable to the grace of the covenant, we may be ſure we do not err in the matter, 2 Sam. vii. 28. 29. Theſe are God's bills and bonds to his people, and by them he ſhews what he allows us to aſk of him. What he is debtor to his faithfulneſs for, we may crave.

(2.) In what terms to pray for it, the terms of the promiſe, terms agreeable to the grace of the covenant. And this is the riſe of ſome expreſſions of God's children in prayer, which may ſeem ſtrange and uncouth to others, that have not their view of the grace of the covenant, which want makes them appear unſeemly to them: yea they may ſeem ſtrange to themſelves. And hence alſo is the agreement to a nicety, that is to be found betwixt the anſwer of prayer, and their expreſſion in prayer, ſometimes.

(3.) Hereby he fills our mouths with arguments, helping

helping us to plead and pray, Job xxiii. 3. 4. The grace and promises of the covenant, held before the eyes by the Spirit shining on them to the soul in prayer, is such a fountain of heavenly oratory, that will make a weak and unlearned Christian plead and pray at the rate that others are strangers to, and which themselves at another time are quite unable to reach.

(4.) Hereby he stirs up in us a faith of particular confidence as to the thing prayed for, so that we are helped to pray believingly, and not doubtingly and distrustfully. The necessity of this faith in prayer is evident from the scriptures, Matth. xxi. 22. Mark xi. 24. 1 Tim. ii. 8. Jam. i. 6. and the Spirit is the author of it, 2 Cor. iv. 13. He gives a view of the promise and grace of the covenant with relation to that thing, and helps to regulate the prayer thereby, strengthens to believe the accomplishment of the promise in that particular for the Mediator's sake, and consequently the hearing of prayer in that particular. Hereby it appears what this faith is, namely, a confidence agreeable to the promise as demonstrated by the Spirit; absolute as to the particular thing, where the promise is demonstrated absolute, or by the Spirit particularly applied to the thing, Psal. cxix. 49. which may be in things not absolutely necessary, as Mark v. 27. 28. 34. Or indefinite, where the promise is left so by the Spirit, that is to say, a confidence of the thing itself, or of what is as good. And hereby also this faith is distinguished from presumption, in that it is founded on a word of God, and the merit of Christ.

(5.) *Lastly*, Hereby he works in us a holy boldness in prayer, Eph. iii. 12. Faith coming before the throne, and spreading out the word of promise with the grace of the covenant, makes bold there for a gracious answer. How bold was Jacob in that case, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me?* Gen. xxxii. 26. Foolish men have ignorantly censured this boldness in the prayers of God's children, but God is well

well pleaſed with it, when he ſays, *Aſk me of things to come concerning my ſons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me*, Iſ xlv. 11.; though the counterfeiting of this holy oil muſt needs be dangerous. It is diſtinguiſhed by its attending humility, as in Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10. *I am not worthy of the leaſt of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou haſt ſhewed unto thy ſervant.*

Sixthly, He raiſeth in us holy deſires for the ſupply of our wants; *groanings which cannot be uttered.* The Spirit working as fire, fires the heart in prayer, ſets it in motion, Cant. v. 4. a luſting, longing, panting for what may tend to the perfection of the new creature, either removing the impediments of its growth, or ſupplying it with freſh incomes of grace for its growth. Of this more afterwards. But thus we are made to pray fervently, Jam. v. 16. Rom. xii 11.

Seventhly, He gives us a view of the merit and interceſſion of the Mediator, Eph. i. 17. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, without whoſe illumination Chriſt will be a hidden beauty to us. He ſhewed Zechariah the Interceſſor, at his work, Zech. i. 12. and Stephen, Acts vii. 56. and he ſhews believers the ſame ſight for ſubſtance, by the eye of faith, 1 Cor. ii. 12. Hereby,

1. He points us to the only way of acceptance of our prayers, John xiv. 6.; while hypocrites overlooking Chriſt, loſe all their requeſts. He teaches us to pray as we ought, and ſo to pray in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, depending on his merit and interceſſion allenarly.

2. He lays before us a firm foundation of confidence before the Lord, 1 John ii. 1. *If any man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous*; an Advocate who never loſes the plea he takes in hand, John xi. 42. having an undiſputable ground to go upon, namely, the purchaſe of his own blood. A freſh view of this makes faith in prayer

renew its ſtrength, and fills with confidence, Eph. iii. 12. *In whom we have boldneſs and acceſs with confidence by the faith of him.*

3. *Laſtly*, He furniſhes us with an anſwer to all objections, that an unbelieving heart and a ſubtile devil can muſter up againſt us, in prayer, Rom. viii. 33. 34. *Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth: who is he that condemneth: It is Chriſt that died, yea rather, that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.* Are we ſinful and vile? The merit of Chriſt is of infinite value. Are we unworthy for whom God ſhould do ſuch a thing? Yet the Mediator is worthy. Can our prayers ſmelling ſo rank of ſinful imperfections, not be accepted at our polluted hands? Yet being perfumed with his merit, they can be accepted at his hand, Rev. viii. 4.

Eighthly, He manages the heart and ſpirit in prayer, which every ſerious ſoul will own to be a hard taſk, Jer. x. 23. *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himſelf: it is not in man that walketh to direct his ſteps.* Gal. v. 16. Therefore the pſalmiſt ſays, Pſal. xxxi. 5. *Into thine hand I commit my ſpirit.* And,

1. He compoſes it for prayer, Pſal. lxxxvi. 11. *Unite my heart to fear thy name.* He frames the heart, that is out of frame for it; commands a heavenly calm in the ſoul, whereby it may be fitted for divine communications; ſaying to the heart toſſed with temptations, troubles, and riſings of corruption, *Peace* and *be ſtill:* and he blows up the fire of grace into a flame, 2 Tim. i. 7. So the preparation of the heart is owing to him, Pſal. x. 17. *Lord, thou haſt heard the deſire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cauſe thine ear to hear.*

2. He fixes it in prayer, that it wander not away in the duty, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. *I will put my Spirit within you, and cauſe you to walk in my ſtatutes, and*

ye

ye shall keep my judgements, and do them. There is need not only of quickening grace in duty, but of establishing grace; for the heart itself is apt to wander off from the serious purpose, and the powers of hell exert themselves to divert from it. But the supply of the Spirit in prayer keeps the heart fixed. And, in the case of wandering,

3. He reduces it from its wanderings in prayer, Psal. xxiii. 3. *He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.* It will always cost a struggle to hedge in the heart in duty, and the help of the Spirit is necessary to maintain the struggle, Rom. vii. 21. Gal. v. 17. But sometimes the heart is quite carried off by its wandering disposition, that the prayer is quite marred, the heart leaving the tongue. In this case the Spirit convinces and humbles the soul under the sense of that sin, and so makes it more serious than before, from thence shewing the corruption of nature, Rom. viii. 37.

Ninthly, and *lastly*, The Spirit causes us to continue in prayer from time to time, till we obtain a gracious answer; and so makes us pray perseveringly, Eph. vi. 18. The Lord may keep his people long hanging on for an answer, ere they get it. The promise may be big with the mercy prayed for, and yet it be not only many months but years ere it bring forth, as in the case of Abraham and David. This is a sore trial, and there would be no keeping from fainting, if the Spirit did not help our infirmity. But he helps to hang on,

1. By accounting for the delay of our answer, in a way consistent with God's honour and our good, and so satisfying us in that point, Psal. xxii. 2. 3. *O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou heareſt not; and in the night-season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabiteſt the praises of Israel.* He helps to discern the unsoundness of the subtile reasonings of unbelief, tending to despondency; and so hinders from making rash conclusions, Psal. lxxvii.

10. *I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.* And so he keeps up in us kind thoughts of God's dispensations.

2. By strengthening faith and hope, which have the battle to fight in this case, Eph. iii. 16. Hangers on at the throne of grace may get a long stand, but they will get their strength renewed, Psal. xxvii. 13. 14. This the Spirit does, by shining anew on the promise; adding other promises to it tending to the same scope; giving some present experience and offfallings from the Lord's hand, whereby the soul is refreshed in the time; and helping to observe the signs of the approaching day, while yet the night continues.

3. *Lastly*, Continuing and reviving on our spirits the sense of our need, which pinching us anew, obliges to renew our suit for relief, until the time we get it, 2 Cor. xii. 8. *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.* If in this case we were left to our own spirits, we would seek our help from another quarter, than hanging on about the Lord's hand, and our sense of need would wear off, and we would drop our petition. But the Spirit perfects what he begins, Psal. cxxxviii. *ult. The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.*

I shall now make some practical improvement of this subject.

Use I. of information. This may let us see,

1. That men in this world are under the influence of that part of the other world, which they are in the road to. If ye are in the road to the happy part of the other world, ye are under the conduct and influence of the Holy Spirit, prompting and helping you to do your duty to God. Whence ye may gather, that they are in the road to destruction, who are under the conduct and influence of the spirit of the world, prompting and helping them to a course of

of sin. Consider the prevailing course of your lives, and trace it to the spring, and ye will find it is the spirit ye are acted by, 1 John iv. 4. One part of men is led by the Spirit of God, and they are holy, heavenly, and spiritual; another by the evil spirit, and they are unholy, hellish, and carnal. He is a spirit of covetousness in some, of uncleanness in others, *&c.*

2. Praying is another thing than men generally take it to be. It is not the exercise of a gift, but of grace; not a piece of a task laid on men, but a privilege they are advanced to; not a work to be done in our own strength, but by help from heaven; not a piece of the form of religion, but of experimental religion. Consider prayer in this scripture-view of it, and among many that bow their knees in prayer to God, there will be found few really praying persons; many whose hearts must say on what they have heard of it, Ezek. xx. 49. *Doth he not speak parables?*

3. True praying will always make people holy and humble; for the Spirit by which it is done, is the Spirit of holiness and light, Matth. iii. 11. Does a man value himself upon, and appear proud and conceited of himself on the account of his good praying? still continue in his profane, untender, unholy course? His prayers are his own, they are not by the help of the Spirit in him. God regards them not.

4. Great is the encouragement that poor sinners have to apply themselves to serious and spiritual praying. The weakest are left inexcuseable, if they neglect prayer still; and the formal professor, if he continue with his formal task-work of praying still. We have the Hearer of prayer to go to, the Father of our Lord Jesus, with our petitions; an Intercessor in heaven, to present them; and an Intercessor on earth, to draw them for us, and help us to make our petitions. This is the office of the Holy Spirit. Therefore,

Use II. Of exhortation. Set yourselves for praying!

ing in the Spirit, Eph. vi. 18. Prayerleſs perſons, give yourſelves to praying, and to this kind of praying. Praying perſons, ſatisfy not yourſelves without this kind of praying. Stand not ſtill in the outer court of prayer, with hypocrites and formaliſts; come in to the inner court, with God's own children. Look for the help of the Spirit, employ the Spirit, in all your duties, and particularly your prayers. Remember that all the prayers are loſt, that are not done in the Spirit.

I ſhall give you ſome advices, how to get the help of the Spirit in prayer.

1. Come to Chriſt in the way of believing the goſpel. The fulneſs of the Spirit is lodged in Chriſt, Rev. iii. 1. He communicates the Spirit to dead ſinners, 1 Cor. xv. 45. with John xx. 22. and this in the word of the goſpel, Gal. iii. 2. It is vain to expect the help of the Spirit in prayer, till once we have received the Spirit to dwell in us, Eph. iii. 17. with 1 John iii. *ult.* To receive the word of the goſpel as an ingrafted, quickening word, whereby we cloſe with Chriſt for all, is the neceſſary foundation for all this.

2. Beware of maltreating the Spirit. And ſo,

(1) Reſiſt not the Spirit, Acts vii. 51. Do not ſtave off convictions, and awakenings out of a ſtate or courſe of ſin. Beware of ſinning over the belly of light, and perſiſting in ſin againſt calls to repentance. That is to reſiſt the Spirit, and ſo to provoke him to leave you.

(2.) Quench not the Spirit, 1 Theſſ. v. 19. If this holy fire begin to burn at any time, ſo as you ſee the light and feel the heat of it, do not withdraw fuel from it, by neglecting the motions and operations of it, not taking care to cheriſh them: do not ſmother them, by not giving them vent in prayer: far leſs drown it out, by taking your ſwing in any ſinful courſe, Luke xxi. 34. *Take heed to yourſelves, leſt at any*

any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.

(3.) Grieve not the Spirit, Eph. iv. 30. The Spirit is grieved by undervaluing his graces, comforts, influences, and his means of communicating them; by sins gross in their nature or aggravations, whereby the conscience is wasted and signally defiled, whereby some have quite withered away, the Spirit leaving them.

(4.) Vex not the Spirit, Is. lxiii. 10. Vex him not by your still relapsing into the same sins, Numb. xiv. 22. especially after convictions of the ill of them, confessions thereof, resolutions against them, and smarting for them. This is the great trial of the divine patience, whereby men are in hazard of being given up of God, Numb. xiv. 27.

(5.) Blaspheme not the Spirit in his operations, particularly praying in the Spirit. Take heed of making a mock of religion, preaching, praying, seriousness, talking slightingly of these things, and of making persons the objects of your derision and spite on these accounts. Sometime these things were only to be found among malignants and persecutors; but now they are to be found among people that pray themselves, and partake of the Lord's table. These Satan is training up for greater service, when such times shall come again. But take heed, it is a dangerous course, as these young blasphemers of the Spirit in his operations felt, 2 Kings ii. 23. 24. *As Elisha was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald-head, Go up, thou bald-head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord: and there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.*

3. Walk tenderly and circumspectly, Eph. v. 15. A loose and untender walk, wherein people let down their watch over the frame of their heart, and the course

course of their life in words and actions, provokes the Spirit to withdraw; when a tender walk is followed with the tokens of his favour, John xiv. 21. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

4. When ye go to prayer, be convinced of your absolute need of the Spirit. Look for him, and wait, and lay yourselves open to his influences, Luke xi. 13. Labour to revive that conviction at every occasion of prayer, and to keep it up throughout it. Look for the Spirit in the promise, believing it with application, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. *I will put my Spirit within you,* &c. Lay yourselves down at his feet, to be enlightened, quickened, *&c,* Jer. xxxi. 18. as one lays open himself to receive the fresh air.

5. Be habitually concerned for answers of prayer. They that are in good earnest to have their petitions granted, will be careful to have them right drawn: but they that are indifferent in the one, will be so in the other too, Psal. v. 3. *In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee,* says David, *and will look up.* If ye be concerned for Christ's intercession for you in heaven, so will ye be for that of the Spirit in your own heart.

6. Let the Bible be dear to you, and look on it as God's word to you in particular, Rom. xv. 4. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.* Rev. iii. *ult. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* The word is the vehicle wherein the Spirit is conveyed to us; it is the channel of communication of his influences to us; and the instrument he works by in us, in all the parts of his working in us, exciting, enlightening, *&c.* Is. lix. *ult. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy*

thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy ſeed, nor out of the mouth of thy ſeed's ſeed, ſaith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.

7. Be careful obſervers of providence, Pſal. cvii. *ult. Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things, even they ſhall underſtand the loving kindneſs of the Lord.* The Spirit is in theſe wheels; and the more people are ſet to obſerve their motions, the more they will readily get to obſerve. This is a way to carry you off formality in prayer, and give you an errand in good earneſt to the throne of grace, whether in the way of petition, confeſſion, or thankſgiving.

8. *Laſtly,* Be watchful in prayer, Eph. vi. 18. The evil ſpirit watches againſt us at all times, and in a ſpecial manner the fowls come down on the carcaſes of our ſpiritual ſacrifices. When ye ſit down on your knees, the heart will be apt to fall a-wandering, and it will be much if before the end it do not give the ſlip. The Spirit of the Lord only can manage our ſpirits, and he will be provoked by our wanderings to withdraw. Therefore take that watchword, Prov. iv. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the iſſues of life.*

I ſhall now proceed to the laſt doctrine obſervable from the text.

Doct. V. *ult. The Spirit helps believers to pray, particularly, cauſing in them gracious groanings, which cannot be uttered.*

In diſcourſing this point, I ſhall,

I. Conſider the nature of theſe groanings cauſed by the Spirit in believers.

II. Shew how the Spirit makes interceſſion for believers with groanings.

III. In what reſpects theſe groanings are groanings that cannot be uttered.

IV. Conclude with two or three reflections.

I. We

I. We shall consider the nature of these groanings caused by the Spirit in believers. And here I shall shew,

1. Of what kind they are.

2. The moving causes of them.

FIRST, I am to shew of what kind these groanings are. There is a twofold groaning.

First, A natural groaning, the effect of pain, and any heavy pressure that lies on mens spirits, Jer. li. 52. *Through all her land the wounded shall groan.* This is common to men with beasts, Joel i. 18. *How do the beasts groan?* And men may groan so, without any gracious movings of heart towards God; therefore they are none of the groanings in the text, Job xxxv. 9. 10. *By reason of the multitude of oppressions, they make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?*

Secondly, Spiritual and gracious groanings, whereby the gracious soul natively expresses its movings towards God under some heavy pressure, 2 Cor. v. 4. *We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.* These are they with which the Spirit helps believers, and which he causes in them. When men are in a swoon, they groan none; but when they are recovering, they will discover it by groaning; an argument that their sense and feeling is returned. So by these groanings believers are distinguished from the dead in sin.

These spiritual groanings of believers speak,

1. Their feeling of a weight and pressure upon them, 2 Cor. v. 4. above cited. Such is the imperfection of our state in this life, that if there is life in a soul, it must groan, because there is no escaping of pressures, from an evil world without, and an evil heart within. And the easy jovial life that men lead without these groanings, they owe it to spiritual death, which has taken away their feeling, Eph. iv. 18. 19.

2. Their labouring under these pressures, like one under

under a burden, Psal. vi. 6. *I am weary with my groaning*, Heb. *laboured to weariness in my groaning*. This imports,

(1.) An earnest endeavour to get them off, or to bear them while they are kept on. The new creature is surrounded with weights of various kinds, which in their own nature tend to hinder its growth, and coming to perfection: and there are mighty labourings and workings of it against them, that it may get forward to its desired perfection, Phil. iii. 14.

(2.) Great difficulty in that labouring, so that the man is as it were out of breath wrestling with his burden, which natively issues in a groan, Eph. vi. 12. There is difficulty in the Christian life, that will try what metal men are of, and will put them to the exerting of their utmost vigour; and therefore it is compared to the exercise of wrestlers and runners.

3. The working of their affections under them; especially,

(1.) Grief of heart, Jer. xlv. 3. Groaning is the natural expression of sorrow: and sighs, sobs, and groans, are what a heart pierced and weighed down with grief naturally vents itself in. Christ was *a man of sorrows*, and so we find him *groaning*, John xi. 38; and true Christians, whatever their natural temper is, will be found to resound as an echo to a groaning Saviour.

Particularly, groans are the more heavy, when they arise from a double grief, a grief for such a thing, and a grief that it is beyond our power to help it: and of this sort mostly are the groans of believers, Rom. vii. 24.

(2.) Earnest desire of help and relief, 2 Cor. v. 2. Here the heart of the believer in these groanings moves directly towards God, with eyes lifted up to heaven. And hence these groanings are prayers in effect, and are so reckoned before God, Rom. viii. 27. Whence it appears how the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings, that helping to groan before the

the Lord, he helps to pray. These groanings may be considered two ways.

[1.] As they are joined with solemn prayer. When a Christian is seriously praying, and is so weighted, that his prayers are here and there interrupted with groanings; these groanings which the prayers are interspersed with, are in God's account parts of the prayer, and as acceptable parts as are in it all; whether they come in when a sentence is closed, or come in before it be perfected, Psal. vi. 3. *My soul is sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long?* Men know not distinctly the meaning of such groans, but the Lord sees it as plain as if expressed by words.

[2.] As they are separate from solemn vocal prayer. And thus we may also consider them two ways.

1.) As they come in the room and stead of vocal prayer intended. I believe it is very possible, that a child of God may go to his knees to pray, and may rise again without having been able to speak a word, but only to groan: and though he thinks he could pray none at all, he is mistaken; as far as the Spirit helped him to groan, he helped him to pray, though none could understand that prayer of his but God himself, who searcheth the heart, Rom. viii. 27. As a full bottle does not orderly empty itself, so a heart may be too full to empty itself by words, but by groans, Psal. lxxvii. 4. *Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.*

2.) As they are without any design of solemn prayer. When a man is walking or sitting, musing on the sinfulness of his own heart and life, or on the wickedness that is done in the world, with the dishonour that comes on the holy name of God thereby; till his heart swelling with grief natively vents itself in a groan: that groaning is in God's account a prayer, and a prayer that shall be heard at length, as proceeding from the influence of his own Spirit. What was it that set the wheel of providence in motion, to stop the wicked career the Egyptians were in,

in, Exod. ii. 24.? Why, God heard the groaning of the children of Israel.

SECONDLY, I come now to shew the moving causes of these groanings of believers. Believers, by the Spirit, have their groanings unto the Lord,

1. Under a pressure of trouble. While they are here, they cannot miss so much of a suffering lot, as will make them groan, Rom. viii. 18. 23.; and by the Spirit, these groans are directed towards God, as those of a child, under the difficulties of the way, are directed to his father.

(1.) Sometimes they are groaning to him under outward troubles. So Israel groaned under the Egyptian bondage, Exod. ii. 23. 24.; yea Christ himself, John xi. 33. 38. These are weights that press their spirits, make them to groan, and look upward for relief, Rom. viii. 23. longing for the day when they shall be beyond them.

(2.) Sometimes they are groaning under inward troubles, Psal. xxx. 7. *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* While here they are liable to spiritual desertions, wounds in their spirits under the apprehensions of the Lord's anger against them. And they groan out their case towards the hand that smites them. Both outward and inward troubles often meet together, as in the case of David, Psal. vi. 2. 3. 6. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak: O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O Lord, how long? I am weary with my groaning, all the night make I my bed to swim: I water my couch with my tears:* and in that of Job, chap. xxiii. 2. *Even to-day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.*

2. Under a pressure of temptations. These are a heavy weight to a gracious soul; they made Paul to go groaning to God again and again, 2 Cor. xii. 7. 8. Our Lord Christ had experience of an hour of the power of darkness, Luke xxii. 53. *When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands a-*

gainst me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. And his followers will not want experience of the same, wherein temptations come on thick and vigorous. These cause groanings,

(1.) Because of their disturbing the peace of the soul; they turn the calm into a storm, that the soul is tossed thereby as on a raging sea, which makes them cry, *Lead us not into temptation.*

(2.) Because of the difficulty of one's keeping his ground against them, Eph. vi. 12. 16. Every temptation has a friend within us, and mens nature is unto temptation as tinder to sparks of fire, apt to take fire; so that it requires hard wrestling to keep our ground.

(3.) Because of the danger of falling thereby into sin. Temptation is the precipice, and sin is the devouring gulf: and they who have a sense of their danger, no wonder they groan, groan under the pressure, and groan for relief.

3. Under the pressure of sin. This is a light burden to the most part of mankind, but it is the heaviest burden to a child of God, and causes in him, through the Spirit, the heaviest groans. For it is of all things the most contrary and opposite to the new nature in him, whence are these continued strugglings, Gal. v. 17. *The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* Many troubles Paul met with; but did any of them all ever cause in him such an exclamation as that, Rom. vii. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!* Now the children of God groan,

1st, Under the weight and pressure of their own sin, the sin of their nature, and the sin of their life, Psal. li. 3. 5. *I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me.* It lies on them heavy as a body of death, while others being dead

dead in ſin, it is no burden to them; no burden to their heart, though ſometimes it may be to their conſcience. And there are three things in their ſin that preſs them ſore.

(1.) The filthineſs of it, that deformity that is in it, being the quite contrary of the holineſs of God expreſſed in his law. The ſoul ſeeing the glory of the holineſs of God, and how its ſin is the very reverſe of that glory; that fills it with ſhame, Ezra ix. 6. and ſelf loathing, Ezek. xxxvi. 31. Beholding itſelf in the glaſs of the pure and holy law, as a polluted and defiled creature, it groans under it as one preſſed down to the earth with a burden, Jer. iii. *ult. We lie down in our ſhame, and our confuſion covereth us: for we have ſinned againſt the Lord our God.*

(2.) The prevailing power of it, Pſal. lxv. 3. *Iniquities prevail againſt me*, Heb. *have been mightier than I.* The new nature ſtruggles againſt ſin, Gal. v. 17. The new man of grace and the old man of ſin are engaged in combat; and oft-times the old man prevails, and the new man is caſt down. Now the believer taking part with grace againſt corruption, groans under this prevailing power of corruption (Rom. vii. 23. 24.) as an inſupportable tyranny, that he longs to be rid of.

(3.) The guilt of it, Pſal. li. 4. *Againſt thee, thee only have I ſinned, and done this evil in thy ſight.* In the eyes of a believer, life lies in the favour of God, the ſhinings of his countenance: but their guilt binds them over to his anger, and overclouds his countenance. And that is a weight that makes them groan; that when it is removed, they rejoice as one that has got a burden taken off his back, Pſal. xxxviii. 4. *Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.* Compared with Hoſ. xiv. 2.—*Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciouſly: ſo will we render the calves of our lips.*

2*dly*, Under the weight and preſſure of the ſin of

others, Ezek. ix. 4. *Go through the midſt of the city, through the midſt of Jeruſalem, and ſet a mark upon the foreheads of the men that ſigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midſt thereof.* As one cannot but loath an abominable thing on another as well as on himſelf; ſo ſin, where-ever it appears, on others, as well as on ourſelves, will be a burden to a gracious ſoul, that will make it groan, Iſ. vi. 5. *Wo is me, for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midſt of a people of unclean lips.* Thus Lot was under a continued burden in Sodom, while he was among them, 2 Pet. ii. 7. 8. And none groan ſpiritually under their own ſin, that do not groan alſo under the ſins of others amongſt whom they live. There are three things in the ſins of others that make them groan.

(1.) The diſhonour to the holy name of God that is in them, Rom. ii. 23. 24. To ſee men trampling under foot the holy laws of God, and, by their profane courſes, affronting the God that made them, and walking after their own luſts, cannot but be a burden to any who truly love the Lord, and are concerned for the honour of his name, Pſal. cxix. 136. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes*, ſays David; *becauſe they keep not thy law.* Zeal for the honour of God, as it is native to his children; ſo, where it cannot prevail againſt ſin, natively vents itſelf in groaning under the burden, Pſal. lxix. 9.

(2.) The ruin to the ſinner's own ſoul that is wrapt up in it, Jer. xiii. 17. There needs no prophetical eye, but an eye of faith in the Lord's word, to foreſee the ruin of thoſe that go on impenitently in their ſinful courſe, Rom. vi. 21. When ſinners are fighting againſt God, by going on in their treſpaſſes; it is eaſy to ſee whoſe head muſt be wounded in the encounter, Pſal. lxviii. 21. and who muſt fall at length, however long they keep foot, Deut. xxxii. 35. Now the proſpect of this is enough to make a gracious ſoul groan for thoſe that cannot groan for themſelves,

Pſal.

Pſal. cxix. 119. 120. *Thou putteſt away all the wicked of the earth like droſs: therefore I love thy teſtimonies. My fleſh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgements.* So Hab. iii. 16.

(3.) The hurt that is in it to others. It is Solomon's obſervation, that *one ſinner deſtroyeth much good*, Eccl ix. *ult.* And there is a wo pronounced on the world, becauſe of offences, Matth xviii. 7. Sn is a noxious vapour, ſpreading its infection over many; wounding ſome, and killing others; grieving to the godly, and hardening to the wicked. And a ſerious view of the miſchief it does to others, beſide the ſinner himſelf, makes the godly groan.

From what is ſaid, it appears that ſin is the fundamental and chief cauſe of the believer's groaning. Troubles outward and inward riſe from it, temptations lead to it. That is it within them, and that is it without them, that makes them groan. That is the burden to the Spirit of God, that grieves him, as one groaning under a burden, Amos ii. 13. Iſ. i. 24. That is it that makes the whole creation groan, Rom. viii. 22. And it is that which makes the believer groan.

II. The ſecond general head is to ſhew how the Spirit makes interceſſion for believers with groanings.

1. He works in them a ſpiritual feeling of their burdens, Rom. viii. 23. *And not only they, but ourſelves alſo, which have the firſt-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourſelves groan within ourſelves.* The time was, when they lay with the reſt of the world, without ſenſe or feeling of the burden on them, and he gave them life: and ſometimes ſpiritual life in them has been ſo low, that they could have but little true feeling of their own caſe; and it was a burden to them to beſtir themſelves to rid themſelves, Cant. v. 3. *I have put off my coat, how ſhall I put it on? I have waſhed my feet, how ſhall I defile them?* But the Spirit excites grace, and gives them a lively feeling of

their ſpiritual caſe, ver. 4. *My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.*

2. He gives them a view of the free and unburdened ſtate, wherein mortality is ſwallowed up of life, 2 Cor. v. 4. There is ſuch a ſtate, it is repreſented in the word of truth. The Spirit ſtrengthens the eye of faith, whereby the ſoul ſees it clearly, though afar off; a ſtate wherein there is an eternal putting off of the burden of trouble, temptation, and ſin.

3. He excites in them ardent deſires of riddance from their burden, and of arriving at the unburdened ſtate, 2 Cor. v. 2. *For in this we groan earneſtly, deſiring to be clothed upon with our houſe which is from heaven.* Rom. viii. 23. *Even we ourſelves groan within ourſelves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* What ardent deſire of deliverance would a man have, who were kept lying among dead corpſes, rotting and ſending forth their ſtench into his noſtrils? Such ardent deſire will a Chriſtian have, when through the Spirit grace is put in lively and vigorous exerciſe, while the dead world without him, and the body of death within him, conſpire to annoy him with their ſavour of death, Rom. vii. 24. Hence,

4. He engages them in earneſt wreſtling with their burden, in order to get clear of it, that the new creature of grace may get up its back, and run the way of God's commandments, Gal. v. 17. Here grace has a mighty ſtruggle with its enemy, longing and panting for the victory, and preſſing towards a ſtate of perfection, Phil. iii. 14.

5. *Laſtly*, Finding themſelves ſtill entangled with their burden, notwithſtanding of all their wreſtling, he helps them to groan out their caſe before the Lord, as a caſe that is beyond their reach to help, Rom. vii. 23. 24. *I ſee another law in my members, warring againſt the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of ſin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the*

the body of this death! But the groaning through the Spirit's aid is not groaning and dying, but,

(1.) Groaning and looking to the Lord for help, Psal. cxxiii. 1. *Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.* The believer groans and looks upward to God for relief. His burden of trouble, he will lie under it, till the Lord take it off, and will not take any sinistrous course for his deliverance, Is. xxviii. 16. *He that believeth, shall not make haste.* The burden of sin, he is never to be reconciled with that, but however long he wrestles with it without the desired success, he will ever be looking and longing for deliverance, Phil. iii. 13. 14.

(2.) Groaning and waiting for relief, Rom. viii. 23. Unbelief makes one to groan and despair of deliverance, either in temporals or spirituals, Jer. ii. 25. But the Spirit makes the believer to groan and wait in hope, Gal. v. 5. Though the eyes fail while they wait for their God, yet still they will wait in hope of the promise, Luke xviii. 1.

III. I come now to shew in what respects these groanings are groanings that cannot be uttered.

1. The working of their affections, thus set in motion by the Spirit, is sometimes such as stops the course of the words. This is often seen in the workings of natural affections, how that either joy or grief filling the heart, mars the ordinary course of words; the heart being too full, to be vented easily in expression. It is not then to be thought strange, that it so falls out in the case of spiritual affections put in mighty motion by the Spirit. Yea they do,

(1.) Sometimes interrupt the expression, and the groaning fills up what is wanting in the words, Psal. vi. 3. Even as a hurt and pained child tells his case to his mother, in imperfect expressions, filling up the want with tears, sighs, and sobs; so that she may have difficulty to understand what ails him: But our Father in heaven has no difficulty in coming at the meaning

meaning of his children so expressed, Rom. viii. 27. *He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.* Our elder Brother sometimes spoke by broken sentences from the same cause, Luke xix. 41. 42. *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* So Gen iii. 22.

(2.) Sometimes stop the expression altogether, like as a multitude of people rushing all together to a door, they all stick, and none can get out, Psal. lxxvii. 4. *I am so troubled that I cannot speak.* So a child of God may go to prayer, and not be able to speak a word. But let them go to their knees before the Lord for all that; and if they cannot speak a word, let them groan their case before the Lord. That is a proper way of praying in the Spirit, and God will certainly hear and accept that kind of praying, though there be nothing but groaning in it. Do ye put away dumb people without an alms, because they cannot speak? are ye not more moved with their signs and humming noise, than with the cries of common beggars? Do not the sighs and sobs of your frighted or hurt children move you more, than their complaints formed in words? And do ye think that God will disregard the groans and sighs of his people, when they cannot speak a word to him? No, surely; he will hear the groaning of the prisoner, Psal. cii. 20.

2. What they feel and see in this case, by the Spirit, is always beyond what they can express in words. I own that what a child of God sometimes feels and sees in prayer, is so small, that their words may sufficiently express it: but when the Spirit helpeth them to these groanings, it is quite otherwise, their words cannot come up to their affections. When the Spirit gives a Christian an experimental feeling of the burden of sin, realizes to him the glory of the unburdened state, and makes him groan between the two, there

there is something there that is truly unspeakable. As the gift of Christ is unspeakable to those who truly see it, 2 Cor. ix. 15. and the joy in the Holy Ghost to those that feel it, 1 Pet. i. 8. so are the groanings by the Spirit unutterable to the groaners.

I conclude with two or three reflections.

1. God's people are a groaning people. For they have the Spirit of Christ, and he makes intercession for them with groanings: they have put on Christ, and he was a groaner. And those that are strangers to these groanings, their groaning time is coming; walking now in the vanity of your minds, will make eternal groaning.

Quest. How are God's people regarded when they get leave to groan on? *Ans.* They must abide the trial of their graces, and be conformed to the image of a groaning Saviour. In due time their burden will be taken off, and they will groan no more.

2. Prayer is a business of great weight and seriousness. It is one thing to say a prayer, another thing to pray indeed acceptably. Wherefore from this, and all that has been said,

3. *Lastly*, Learn to pray by the help of the Spirit, for no other praying is acceptable to God: look to him in all your addresses to the throne, and depend upon his guiding and influence; that through Christ Jesus, ye may have access by one Spirit unto the Father, Eph. ii. 18.

Of

Of praying in the Name of Jesus Christ.

The substance of some Sermons preached at Etterick in the year 1728.

JOHN xvi. 23.

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

OUR Lord Jesus is here comforting his disciples under the want of his bodily presence which they had so long enjoyed, shewing them that it should be well made up to them. They should see him again after his resurrection, though not to return to that familiarity with them as before; they should see him by the Spirit, in his exalted state; and should find God so reconciled to them by his sacrifice of himself, that they should have a boldness of access to the throne in heaven, which they had not before; that in that day they should ask him nothing in that manner they used while he was with them in the days of his flesh; but in a manner more to his honour and their comfort. Here he declares,

1. What that manner is, and that in two things. (1.) They should apply themselves, in asking or petitioning, directly to the Father as their God and Father allowing them access to him, for the supply of all their needs. (2.) They should apply to him in the name of the Son, the exalted Redeemer, expressly, seeing more clearly the way of sinners treating with God through the Mediator, than either the Jewish church had done, or they themselves while they had his bodily presence with them.

2. The success of that manner of applying to God.

It

It should be successful in all points. Whatsoever, in spiritual or temporal things, they should petition the Father in the name of Christ, he should give it them for his sake.

The following doctrine arises from the words.

DOCT. *Whosoever would pray to God acceptably, must pray to him in the name of Jesus Christ.*

In treating this point, I shall,

I. Shew what it is to pray in the name of Jesus Christ.

II. Give the reasons why acceptable prayer must be in the name of Christ.

III. *Lastly*, Apply.

I. I am to shew what it is to pray in the name of Jesus Christ. That this takes in whatever is necessary in prayer, both as to matter and manner, is evident from the text, *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name*, &c. And no man can thus pray, but by the Spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 3.

Negatively, It is not a bare mentioning his name, in prayer, and concluding our prayers therewith, Matth. vii. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* We must begin, carry on, and conclude our prayers in the name of Christ, Col. iii. 17. *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.* The saints use the words, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 57.; but the virtue is not in the words, but in the faith wherewith they are used. But alas! these are often produced as an empty scabbard, while the sword is away.

Positively, we may take it up in these four things.

FIRST, We must go to God at Christ's command, and by order from him. This is the import of the phrase *in his name*, Matth. xviii. 20. *Where two*

two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. If a poor body can get a recommendation from a friend to one that is able to help him, he comes with confidence and tells, Such a one has sent me to you. Our Lord Christ is the friend of poor sinners, and he sends them to his Father to ask supply of their wants; and allows them to tell that he sent them, John xvi. 24. And coming that way, in faith, they will not be refused. This implies,

1. The soul's being come to Christ in the first place, John xv. 7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* Sense of need brings the soul to Christ, as the poor man's friend, who has the favour of the court of heaven, that through his means the soul may get its wants supplied there. See Acts xii. 20. We must first come to Christ by faith, ere we can make one acceptable prayer to God.

2. That however believers in Christ are relieved of the burden of total indigence, John iv. 14. yet while they are in the world, they are still compassed with wants. God will have them to live from hand to mouth, and so to honour him by hanging on daily about his hand for their supply from time to time. In heaven they shall be set down at the fountain; but now the law of the house is, *Ask, and ye shall receive*, Matth. vii. 7.

3. That Christ sends his people to God by prayer, for the supply of their wants. This he does by his word, commanding them to go, and by his Spirit inclining them to go. For thus the whole Trinity is glorified by the praying believers, the Father as the Hearer of prayer, the Son as the Advocate and Intercessor presenting their prayers to the Father, and the Spirit as the Author of their prayers, Eph. ii. 18. *For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

4. That acceptable prayer is performed under the sense

sense of the command of a God in Christ, If. xxxiii. 22. *For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us.* Men may pray, though not acceptably, with little or no sense of the command of God on their consciences; that is not serving God, but themselves. They may pray under the sense of the command of an absolute God out of Christ; that is but slavish service to God. But the believer has the sense of the command, as from Jesus Christ, where majesty and mercy are mixed in it; and that is son-like service.

5. *Lastly*, That the acceptable petitioner's encouragement to pray is from Jesus Christ, Heb. iv. 14. 15. 16. *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* It is Christ's token that he has given them to carry with them, that affords them all their confidence with God: that is the promises of the covenant sealed with his own blood. Faith laying hold on these, carries them as Christ's token to the Father, upon which a poor criminal may expect to find acceptance and supply.

SECONDLY, We must pray for Christ's sake, as our motive to the duty. This also is imported in the phrase, *in his name*, Mark ix. 41. *Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, in my name, because ye belong to Christ,—he shall not lose his reward.* As we must be influenced by his command, as the reason of our praying, so with regard to him as our motive. As there is no coming to God but by him; so there is no kindly drawing of us to God, but by the allurement of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Any other sight of the glory of God would fright the sinner away from him, as from

a consuming fire. So we must behold God in Christ, and go to him as the object of our love and adoration. This implies,

1. An high esteem of Christ in the acceptable petitioner, 1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto you which believe, he is precious.* No man's prayer will be acceptable to God, who wants a transcendent esteem of the Lord Christ; for God is honoured in his Son, John v. 23. And the more the esteem of Christ has place in one's heart, the more, it will be found, he will give himself to prayer.

2. Complying with the duty out of love to Christ, Heb. vi. 10. *God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love.* The soul must discern Christ's stamp on every duty, and so embrace it for his sake. The duty of prayer some embrace and use, because of the usefulness of it to themselves; but God's children embrace it for the sake of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 14. *For the love of Christ constraineth us.* Love natively leads to desire communion with the party beloved: and love to Christ recommends prayer to a holy heart, as a means of communion with God in Christ.

3. Complying with the duty out of respect to his honour and glory, Phil. i. 21. *For to me to live is Christ.* Christ humbled himself, and therefore the Father has glorified him, chap. ii. 9. 10. 11. And every act of praying in his name glorifies him, being an acknowledgement before God of the unspeakable dignity of his merit and intercession, as procuring that access for sinners unto God, that no other way could have been obtained.

4. *Lastly*, Doing it with heart and good-will: for what is done for Christ's sake by a gracious soul, must needs be so done, Is. lxiv. 5. *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.* One praying indeed in the name of Christ, is acted by a principle of love to him, which oiling the wheels of the soul, sets all in motion, so that the heart is poured out like water before

fore the Lord. And where that principle is wanting, there is an acting by constraint.

THIRDLY, We must in praying to God act in the strength of Christ. This also is imported in the phrase, Luke x. 17. *And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.* So Zech. x. *ult. I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name.* We must go to prayer, as David went against Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. *I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.* And here consider,

1. What this presupposes.
2. Wherein it lies.

FIRST, Let us consider what this acting in prayer in the strength of Christ presupposes. It presupposes,

1 That praying acceptably is a work quite beyond any power in us, 2 Cor. iii. 5. *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.* The want of this persuasion mars many a prayer, and makes many a rash and inconsiderate approach unto God. To manage aright an address to God on his throne of glory, cannot miss to appear such a work in the eyes of all, who have due thoughts of God's majesty, or of their own ignorance and weakness.

2. That there is a stock of grace and strength in Jesus Christ, for our help, as to other duties, so for this duty of prayer, 2 Cor. xii 9. *My grace is sufficient for thee.* Man at first had his stock of grace in his own hand, and he made a sad account of it. Now the Lord has lodged it in the Mediator, as the head of believers, Col. i. 19. *For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.* In him there is not only a fulness of sufficiency for himself, but of abundance for his people, as of water in a fountain, or of sap in the stock of a tree, John iii. 34. *God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him*

3. Sinners are welcome to partake of this stock of grace and strength in Christ, 2 Tim. ii. 1. For it is lodged in him as a storehouse, to be communicated.

The fountain stands open, and whosoever will may come and take, Zech. xiii. 1. They are very welcome: as it is an ease and pleasure for the mother to have the full breast sucked by her babe, so it is a pleasure to Christ to communicate of his fulness, Is. lxvi. 12 13. *For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.*

4. We must be united to Christ, as members to the head, and branches to the vine, if we would act in prayer or any other duty, in the strength of Christ, John xv. 5. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.* We cannot partake of the stock of grace and strength for duty in Christ, without partaking of himself, Rom. viii. 32. As the soul in a separate state doth not quicken the body, so the soul not united to Christ cannot be fitted for duty by strength derived from him. The graft must knit with the stock, ere it can partake of the sap.

Secondly, I am to shew wherein acting in prayer in the strength of Christ lies. It lies in two things.

1. The soul's going out of itself for strength to the duty; that is, renouncing all confidence in itself for the right management of it, 2 Cor. iii. 5. forecited. Every duty is to be undertaken, begun, and carried on, under a sense of utter weakness and insufficiency for it in ourselves.

(1.) Gifts are not to be trusted to, Prov. iii. 5. That is the way to get gifts blasted, for they are but an arm of flesh, Jer. xvii. 5. 6. And though ye should have the free exercise of your gift; yet a bare gift can never make a man do a duty graciously. The work will still be but a dead work, without the life of grace derived from Christ the Lord of life.

(2.) Nay

(2.) Nay grace received and implanted in us is not to be trusted to for this end. Learn ye, that even of our gracious selves we can do nothing, 2 Cor. iii. 4. 5. There must be continued supplies of grace from Christ unto us, else we will bring forth no fruit, John xv. 5. It is true, grace is a seed that in its nature tends to fruit: but what will come of the seed, if the showers, and dew, and heat of the sun be with held?

2. The soul's going to Christ for strength to duty, by trusting on him for it, Is. xxvi. 4. *Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.* This is the exercising of faith, by which the saints live, Gal. ii. 20. and derive grace and strength from Christ their head, John i 16. Faith is that grace by which the weak soul fetches in strength and grace from the fountain of it in Christ. So he prays in the name of Christ, in this respect, who goes about the duty in confidence of, and trusting in Christ for, strength and ability to manage it acceptably, Psal. lxxi. 16. *I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.* To make this more plain, consider,

(1.) By faith a Christian sees, in the glass of the word, an utter inability for duty in himself, believing, on the testimony of the word, that of himself he is unable to work any good work, Is xxvi. 12.; nay not to begin it well, Phil. i. 6. to will it, chap. ii. 13. nor so much as to think it, 2 Cor. iii. 5. In all which the Christian's faith is strengthened by experience.

(2.) By faith he sees also a fulness of grace and strength treasured up in Christ the head, to be communicated to the members of his body, 2 Cor. xii. 9. *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* Col. i. 19. *It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.* And he beholds the promises he has made of it, as the conduit-pipes by which it is conveyed unto them, 2 Pet. i. 4. *Whereby are given unto*

us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature. These things the Christian believes on the testimony of the same word of God: and thus he sees a sufficiency to oppose to his own emptiness, and a fulness of strength to remedy his own weakness.

(3.) By faith he trusts that this fulness in Christ shall be made forthcoming to him, in a measure of it, for the duty, according to the promise, Psal. xviii. 2. *The Lord is—my God, my strength, in whom I will trust.* Hab. iii. 19. *The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.* Thus there is a particular application in faith, that the Christian trusts in the word of promise, that grace and strength shall be given to him. So the word holds it out for particular application by faith, 2 Cor. xii. 9. *My grace is sufficient for thee;* and this is the way to bring in strength, as the Psalmist's experience testifies, Psal. xxviii. 7. *The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped:* and so the promise secures it, Jer. xvii. 7. 8. *Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.* Take away that trust, that particular application, the soul is left helpless, having nothing to gripe to, and the communication of strength is blocked up; according to what the apostle James says, chap. i. 6. 7. *Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

FOURTHLY, We must in praying to God pray for Christ's sake, as the only procuring cause of the success of our prayers, Dan. ix. 17. *Now therefore,*

O

O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. Going to God in prayer, we must as it were put off our own persons, as not worth noticing in the sight of God, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ; come and receive the blessing in the elder Brother's cloaths, having all our hope from the Lord's looking on the face of his Anointed. This is the main thing in the text, a relying on the Lord Jesus for the success of our prayers in heaven. Here I shall shew,

1. What is presupposed in this.
2. Wherein it consists.

First, I am to shew what is presupposed in praying to God for Christ's sake. It presupposes,

1. That sinners in themselves are quite unacceptable in heaven, even in their religious duties. Not only are the wicked so, Prov. xv. 8.; but even the saints considered in themselves, Is. lxiv. 6. The reason is plain, God is holy, we are impure and defiled. There is such a rank smell of sinful pollution about us, that the opening of a sinner's mouth in prayer is like the opening of an unripe grave, Rom. iii. 13. It is too strong, that we cannot sweeten ourselves. The loathsome savour of the sins about the best, cannot be mastered by any sweet savour of their duties, but only by the sweet savour of the sacrifice of Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 15. with Eph. v. 2.

2. Christ is most acceptable there; he is the darling of heaven, the prime favourite there, Matth. iii. *ult. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* He is acceptable there as God, the only begotten of the Father from eternity: but that is not it. He is acceptable as God-man, Mediator, who has in our flesh fulfilled his Father's will, by his obedience and death, Eph. v. 2. *Christ—hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.* And he is acceptable to the Father,

(1.) In himself, Matth. iii. *ult.* above cited. The Father

Father is well pleased with his person, and delights in him, as the brightness of his own glory, and his own express image. He is well pleased with his undertaking the work of our redemption, and his management of that work: he is pleased with his holy birth, righteous life, and complete satisfaction; so pleased with his humbling himself, that he has *highly exalted him*, Phil. ii. 9.

(2) He is so well pleased with him, that he accepts sinners for his sake, Eph. i. 6. *He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.* For his sake rebel-sinners are accepted to peace and favour, criminals to eternal life, their performances mixed with much sinful imperfections, are accepted as pleasing in his sight. The sweet smell of his sacrifice so masters the rank savour of sin about them, that they are for his sake brought into his presence and made near. The Father knows not to refuse him any request, John xi. 42. *I knew that thou hearest me always.*

3. Sinners are warranted to come to the throne of grace in his name, Heb. iv. 15. 16. *We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* It is sinners of mankind, not of the angel-tribe, chap. ii. 16. *For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.* Whatever be our case, he will do for us to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25. He is an Advocate that will take our most desperate causes in hand, carry them through, and that in a way agreeable to justice, 1 John ii. 1. *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* The petitions put in his hand cannot miscarry.

Secondly, I am now to shew wherein this praying to God for Christ's sake consists. And,

First, In general, it consists in our relying on the Lord

Lord Jesus only, for the success of our prayers in heaven. And,

1. Consider what we are in this matter to rely on him only for.

(1.) We are to rely on him only, for access to God in our prayers, Eph. iii. 12. *In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.* In vain do we pray, if we get no access to the prayer-hearing God: and there is no access to him, but through Christ, John xiv. 6. Whoever attempt to draw near to God otherwise, will get the door of heaven cast on their face: but we must take hold of the Mediator, and come in at his back, who is Heaven's favourite and the sinner's friend.

(2.) For acceptance of our prayers, Eph. i. 6. forecited. Our Lord Christ is the only altar that can sanctify our gift, Heb. xiii. 10. 15. If we lay the stress of our acceptance on any person or thing, but Jesus Christ the crucified Saviour, we cannot be accepted. For our best duties being mixed with sinful imperfections, cannot be accepted of a holy God but through a Mediator; and there is no Mediator but he, 1 Tim. ii. 5.

(3.) For the gracious answer of prayer in granting our petitions. So the text, *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.* We have forfeited all other pleas for Heaven's favours, by Adam's fall. And now no prayers can be heard and answered in heaven; but for Christ the second Adam's sake. A sinner cannot have the least favourable glance from the throne of God, but what is given for Christ's sake. What men get otherwise, they get with a vengeance, an impression of wrath on it, Hos. xiii. 11. Psal. lxxviii. 29.

2. Consider how we are to eye Christ as the object of this reliance. We are to eye him in it as our great High Priest, Heb. iv. 15. 16. forecited. A believer is to eye Christ in his prayers, in all his offices. We are to eye him as our Prophet, teaching us by his Spirit

Spirit how and what to pray for; as our King, having the office of distributing Heaven's favours to poor sinners: but in point of our access, acceptance, and hearing, we are to eye him as a Priest; for it is in that office only we can find what to rely on before God, for these ends. And here we find,

(1.) The infinite merit of his sacrifice to rely on, Rom. iii. 25. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.* Man by sin lost himself, and all Heaven's favours from the greatest to the least, from heaven's happiness to the least drop of water to refresh him. Accordingly Christ redeeming sinners by his blood, paid the ransom not only for their persons, but for all Heaven's favours to them, from the greatest to the least. Therefore he says, *Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David,* Is. lv. 3. He bought their seat in heaven, their peace, and pardon, yea and their seat on earth, their bread, and their water, Is. xxxiii. 16. *He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.* Now, would we pray in his name?

Then in prayer eye Christ on the cross, bleeding, dying, and by his bloody death and sufferings paying for the mercy thou art seeking. Is it a spiritual mercy, or a temporal mercy? It is a purchased mercy, the purchase of the blood of Christ; seek it of God as such, as the purchase of the blood of Jesus.

(2.) His never-failing intercession to rely on, Heb. vii. 25. *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* Our great High Priest having offered his sacrifice on earth, is now gone into the heavens, presenting there the blood of his sacrifice in the infinite merit thereof before his Father; that he may obtain the purchased mercies for his people. So that the supply of the needs of his

his people, is his business in heaven, as well as it is theirs on earth. And he offers their prayers to his Father, Rev. viii. 4. Therefore if ye would pray in his name,

In prayer eye Christ as your Intercessor at the right hand of God, Rom. viii. 34. If the price of his blood was extended to the purchasing of all the mercies we need; surely his intercession extends from the greatest to the least of them also. And therefore we need not stick to put our petitions for any mercy we need, in his hand. Hence it may appear,

Secondly, More particularly, wherein praying in the name of Christ, and for his sake, consists.

1. Renouncing all merit and worth in ourselves, in point of access, acceptance, and gracious answer, saying with Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10. *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant.* If we stand on personal worth, from the consideration of our doings or sufferings, or any thing in or about ourselves, we pray in our own name, and will speed accordingly. Self-denial is absolutely necessary to this kind of praying, that stopping our eyes to all excellencies in ourselves or duties, we may betake ourselves to free grace only.

2. Believing that however great the mercies are, and however unworthy we are, yet we may obtain them from God through Jesus Christ, Heb. iv. 15. 16. There can be no praying in faith without this. If we do not believe this, we dishonour his name, whether our unbelief of it arise from the greatness of the mercy needed, or from our own unworthiness, or both. For nothing can be beyond the reach of his infinite merit and never-failing intercession.

3. Seeking in prayer the mercies we need of God, for Christ's sake accordingly. So we present our petitions *in his name*, John xvi. 24. We are to be ashamed before God in prayer, ashamed of ourselves, but not ashamed to beg in the name of his Son. Our holy

holy shame respects our unworthiness: but Christ's merit and intercession are set before us, as a ground of confidence.

4. Pleading on his merit and intercession, Psal. lxxxiv. 9. *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed.* We are not only to seek, but to plead in prayer, as needy petitioners whose pinching necessity makes them fill their mouths with arguments, Job xxiii. 3. 4. Christ's merit and intercession is the fountain of these arguments; and to plead on mere mercy, mercy for mere mercy's sake, is too weak a plea. But faith founding its plea on Christ's merit, urges God's covenant and promise made thereupon, Psal. lxxiv. 20. his glorious perfections shining in the face of Jesus, the honour of his name manifested in Christ.

5. *Lastly*, Trusting that we shall obtain a gracious answer for his sake, Mark xi. 24. *What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* The soul praying according to the will of God, is to exercise a faith of particular confidence in God through Christ, which is not only warrantable, but necessary, Jam. i. 6. 7. This glorifies the Mediator, and glorifies the faithfulness of God in the promise: and the want of it casts dishonour on both.

II. The second general head is, to give reasons why acceptable prayer must be in the name of Christ. I offer the following.

1. Because sinners can have no access to God without a Mediator, and there is no other Mediator but he, Is. lix. 2. 1 Tim. ii. 5. Innocent Adam might have come to God immediately in prayer, and been accepted; for while there was no sin, there was no need of a Mediator. But now the justice of God bars the access of sinners to him; and there is none to mediate a peace betwixt God and the sinner but Christ, John xiv. 6.

2. Because

2. Because the promises of the covenant were all made to Jesus Christ, as the party who fulfilled the condition of the covenant, Gal. iii. 16. The promises are the measure of acceptable prayer: what God has not promised, we cannot warrantably pray for. In prayer we come to God to claim the promises: and we cannot claim them, but in the right of Christ the head of the covenant, to whom they were made; that is to say, we cannot pray acceptably but in his name.

3. Because our praying in the name of Christ, is a part of the reward of Christ's voluntary humiliation for God's glory and the salvation of sinners, Phil. ii. 9. 10. He gave his life a ransom for sinners, and a price of redemption of their forfeited mercies: therefore God has statuted and ordained, that sinners shall crave and receive all their mercies in his name, that they shall kneel in him to receive the blessing, as his members.

4. Because it is not consistent with the honour of God, to give sinners a favourable hearing otherwise, John ix. 31. with 2 Cor. v. 19. 21. Where is the honour of God's justice, if Heaven's favours be bestowed on sinners otherwise than on the account of a satisfaction?—the honour of his holiness, if they may have communion with him as they are in themselves?—of his law, if they may get their petitions of mercy answered, but in the name of one who has answered its demands? They dishonour God, his Son, and his mercies, that ask any thing but in the name of Christ.

5. Nothing can favour with God, that comes from a sinner, but what is perfumed with the merit and intercession of Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 15. Eph. i. 6. It is not the inward excellency of the prayers of the saints, that makes them acceptable in God's sight; but the righteousness of Christ, which is by faith on the praying saint praying in faith, Heb. xi 4. The merit of his righteousness, presented in his intercession, with

the prayer, makes it acceptable, Rev. viii. 4. It savours in heaven out of his mouth.

6. *Lastly*, The stated way of all gracious communication between heaven and earth, is through Jesus Christ, who opened a communication between them by his blood, when it was blocked up by the breach of the first covenant, John xiv. 6. Whatever favour is conveyed to us from heaven in a way of grace and love, whatever we offer to God in a way of duty or desire, must go through him. This was represented in Jacob's ladder, Gen. xxviii. If we would come to God, or present a petition to him, it must be through Christ, Heb. x. 19. 20. If the Lord comes to us, or sends us a gracious answer, it is through him, 2 Cor. v. 19.

I shall now make some practical improvement of this subject.

Use I. of information. From this doctrine we learn,

1. What a holy God we have to do with in prayer, who hath said, *I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified*, Lev. x. 3. He sits on his throne of majesty, and we can have no access to him, being sinners, but through Christ. His very throne of grace, from which he breathes love and good-will to sinners, is founded on justice and judgement, Psal lxxxix. 14. We must come to him under the covert of the Mediator's broad righteousness and efficacious blood; otherwise we cannot stand before his spotless holiness.

2. Let us prize the love of Christ, in making an entrance for us into the holy place, through the vail of his flesh, Heb. x. 20. The flaming sword of justice, which guarded the way to the tree of life, was bathed in his blood, to procure us access to God. He bought again the estate that Adam forfeited for us, and he bought it with his precious blood; that since we could not have it again in our own name, we might have it in his.

3. There

3. There can be no acceptable praying to God but by believers united to Christ, having on the garment of his righteousness, John ix. 31. *God heareth not sinners.* An unregenerate man, living in his natural state, may pray; but can never pray acceptably, while in that state: for he cannot pray in the name of Christ, which is not the work of the tongue using these words, but the work of the heart by faith relying on Christ, his merit and intercession.

4. Even believers cannot pray in the name of Christ, and so not acceptably, without faith in exercise. It is not enough for this end, that one have faith in the root and principle; but faith must be exercised in every duty, Gal. ii. 20. *The life which I now live in the flesh*, says Paul, *I live by the faith of the Son of God.* It is as necessary to every acceptable performance, as breathing to the common actions of life, John xv. 5.

5. *Lastly*, We have great need not to be rash in our approaches to God in prayer, but that we prepare our hearts and compose them aforehand for such a solemn duty, Eccl. v. 1. We should beware lest custom in these things, and particularly in the more frequent and less solemn approaches to God in prayer, at our meals, turn us to formality; but should labour to impress our hearts with the holiness of God, the necessity of a Mediator, and stir up grace in our hearts.

Use II. of reproof to all those who approach unto God in prayer, otherwise than by and in the name of Jesus Christ. The idolatrous Papists allow other mediators of intercession, besides the one only Mediator; and pray to, employ, and rely on saints and angels, to intercede in heaven for them, though religious worshipping of the creature is directly forbidden, Matth. iv. 10. and angel-worship, Rev. xix. 10. and the saints departed are not acquainted with our particular cases, Is. lxiii. 16. But those also among us are to be reproved, as approaching to God in prayer otherwise than in Christ's name,

1. Who make approach unto God in prayer, as an absolute God, without consideration of the Mediator. This is the effect of the natural blindness and ignorance of mens minds; not knowing God, nor discerning the flaming sword of justice guarding the tree of life, they rush forward on the point thereof to pull the fruits. Let such consider their dangerous rashness, and reform, Heb. xii. *ult. For our God is a consuming fire*; knowing they can never worship God acceptably in that way, John v. 23. *He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.* Hence the knowledge and belief of the doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all acceptable worship, without which it cannot subsist, Eph. ii. 18. *For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father*; and the Christian church is thereby distinguished from the rejected Jews, 1 Thess. i. 1. and it must be practically improved in every piece of true worship.

2. Those who, in their approaches to God, put other things in the room of the Mediator, or join other things with him. For as there is no access to God without a Mediator, so there is none but by the one Mediator only, John xiv. 6. *No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* But who do that? Even all those who in their approaches by prayer, lay the stress of their access and acceptance with God, in whole or in part, on any thing but Christ. Whatever thou reliest on for these ends, besides Christ, has his room, and so mars the duty, Phil. iii. 3. and provokes God, Jer. xvii. 5. 6. There is a bias in the hearts of the best this way.

There are four things which men are apt to put thus in the room of Christ, in whole or in part,

(1.) Their own worth, in respect of their qualifications and good things done by them, Judg. xvii. *ult.* This the proud Pharisee relied on in his approach, Luke xviii. 11. 12. *God, I thank thee*, says he, *that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers,*

dulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. So proud and conceited professors go to their prayers, and with their money in their hand miss the opened market of free grace. They say they beg for Christ's sake, but yet in reality they have more expectation from their own personal worth, than from the merit of Christ's blood. Their want of a humbling work of the Spirit raises the value they have for themselves; and the want of saving illumination sinks the value of Christ's merit with them.

(2.) The mercy of an unatoned God, that is, mercy considered in God without a view to the satisfaction of his justice by the Mediator. This the ignorant and profane are apt to stumble on, whose eyes are open to the mercy of God, but blind to his justice, which therefore they are in no concern about the satisfaction of. It never enters into their hearts, to question, how it is consistent with the honour and justice of God to accept them? but the notion they have framed of the mercy of God answers all their difficulties. Howbeit, no such mercy is proposed to sinners in the gospel, Is. xxvii. 11. Psal. lxxxv. 10. It is true, it was a good prayer of the publican, Luke xviii. 13. *God be merciful to me a sinner:* but his words bear an eye to mercy through a propitiation: and so was the mercy of God held forth to the Old-Testament church in the mercy-seat, as well as to the New.

(3.) The manner of their performing the duty itself. Great weight is laid here, as if a well-said prayer were sufficient to recommend itself and the petitioner too. Cain laid such weight on his sacrifice, Gen. iv. 4. 5. A flash of affections and seeming tenderness in prayer, is in the eyes of many a prayer that cannot be rejected, Is. lviii. 3. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?* Enlargement in duty raises the value of it so in their own

eyes, that they cannot think but it must be valuable in the eyes of God too. So in the earnestness of the prayer, and many words used, Matth. vi. 7. Let men examine their expectations, and they will be fair to find more weight laid there than on the merit of Christ, though this only can bear weight.

(4.) Their own necessity, Hos. vii. 14. *They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me.* Sense of need is a necessary qualification in acceptable prayer: but pinching necessity, where the heart is unhumbled, is apt to be set in a room higher than becomes it, as if of itself it were a sufficient plea. When it is thus abused, may be known by this, That on the not hearing of the prayer, the heart riseth against God: A sign that the petitioner is not as a needy beggar craving an alms, but a needy creditor craving his own. Our necessity should quicken us to seek, but it is the merit and intercession of Christ alone that is to be relied on for our access.

Use III. Wherefore rely on Christ, and on him only, for access to God in, and acceptance of, your prayers; that is, Pray in the name of Christ.

Mot. 1. In this way of praying ye may obtain any thing ye really need. So says the text, *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.* There is no mercy so great, nor any sinner so unworthy, but he may have it, coming to God this way, Heb. vii. 25. with John xi. 42. God can bestow it in that way with the safety of his honour, the sinner may confidently expect it on good grounds. For Christ's merit is infinite, his intercession always prevalent.

2. There is no access to God, nor acceptance of prayer another way, John xiv. 6. It is through him our persons can be accepted, Eph. i. 6. and through him our duties can be so, Heb. xi. 4. Every sacrifice not offered on this altar, however valuable it seems,

seems, will be rejected. There is no return of prayer in a gracious manner otherwise.

I conclude with giving you a few directions for praying in the name of Christ.

1. Labour to impress your hearts with a sense of the spotless holiness and exact justice of God, Psal. lxxxix. 7. This will shew the necessity of a Mediator to interpose, as in Israel's case.

2. Be sensible of your need of, and look for, the help of the Spirit in every approach, Rom. viii. 26. As the sending of the Spirit is the fruit of Christ's merit and intercession; so the Spirit being come leads back to the Mediator, Eph. ii. 18.

3. Shake off all confidence in yourselves, and see your utter unworthiness of the least mercies, how great soever your need of them be, Gen. xxxii. 10. As Jacob put off his own raiment to put on his elder brother's for the blessing, so do ye cast off your own filthy rags, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Satisfy not yourselves with bare seeking for Christ's sake; that is not enough: but be confident that ye shall get access, acceptance, and a gracious return for his sake, Mark xi. 24. Raise a believing expectation in him.

Quest. How may one reach that? *Ans.* (1.) By a believing view of Christ on the cross purchasing, and at the Father's right hand interceding for, our mercies; and particularly eying his sufferings, agreeable to your wants, as in the case of your want of light, the darkness came on him; in the case of your want of bread, his hunger, *&c.* (2.) By a believing application of the promises suitable to your needs. (3.) Considering this as God's ordinance for communication between heaven and earth, Gal. iii. 8.

5. *Lastly*, Watch against your hearts going off to any confidence in the duty itself: for that is to dishonour the name of Christ, and will provoke the Spirit of the Lord to depart from you.

Of

Of God's hearing of Prayer.

The ſubſtance of ſome Sermons preached at Etterick in the year 1728.

Psalm lxv. 2.

O thou that heareſt prayer, unto thee ſhall all fleſh come.

WHAT avails prayer, if it be not heard? But God's people need not lay it aſide on that ſcore. Our text bears two things with reſpect to that matter.

1. A comfortable title aſcribed to God, with the unanimous conſent of all the ſons of Zion, who are all praying perſons, *O thou that heareſt prayer.* He ſpeaks to God in Zion, or Zion's God, that is, in New-Teſtament language, to God in Chriſt. An abſolute God thundereth on ſinners from Sinai, there can be no comfortable intercourſe betwixt God and them, by the law: but in Zion from the mercy-ſeat in Chriſt, he is the hearer of prayer; they give in their ſupplications, and he graciouſly hears them. Such faith of it they have, that praiſe waits there for the prayer-hearing God.

2. The effect of the favour of this title of God, ſpread abroad in the world, *Unto thee ſhall all fleſh come:* not only Jews, but Gentiles. The poor Gentiles, who have long in vain implored the aid of their idols, hearing and believing that God is the hearer of prayer, will flock to him, and preſent their petitions. They will throng in about his door, where by the goſpel they underſtand beggars are ſo well ſerved. They will *come in even unto thee,* Heb. They will come

come in even to thy ſeat, thy throne of grace, even unto thee thyſelf, through the Mediator.

The doctrine I chiefly propoſe ſpeaking to, is,

DOCT. *God in Chriſt is the hearer of prayer.*

In handling this doctrine, I ſhall ſhew,

I. Wherein God's hearing of prayer lies.

II. The import of his being the hearer of prayer.

III. What prayers they are that God hears.

IV. More particularly conſider the hearing and anſwering of prayer.

V. *Laſtly*, Apply.

I. I am to ſhew wherein God's hearing of prayer lies. God being omniſcient and every where preſent, there can nothing be ſaid or done in the world, but he hears or diſcerns it. But the hearing of prayer in the ſenſe of the ſcripture is a peculiar privilege of the Lord's people, and lies in the following things.

1. God's accepting of one's prayer, Pſal. cxli. 2. *Let my prayer be ſet forth before thee as incenſe; and the lifting up of my hands, as the evening-ſacrifice.* Many prayers are ſaid in the world, that are ſo far from being accepted of God, that they are an abomination to him, Prov. xxviii 9. God turns them away from him, as one flings a petition over the bar, that he is diſpleaſed with, Pſal. lxvi. *ult.* But the prayers that he hears, he is well pleaſed with them, he approves of them. Hence he is ſaid to attend, hearken to the voice, and conſider prayer, as one liſtens to a ſound that pleaſes him, and dwells on a pleaſing thought, Pſal. lxvi. 19. *Verily God hath heard me: he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.* He delights in the petition, Prov. xv. 8. *The prayer of the upright is his delight.* He loves to hear the petitioner's voice, Cant. ii. 14. *Let me hear thy voice; for ſweet is thy voice.* He accepts the petitioner's perſon, and his petition too, as the angel ſaid unto Lot, Gen.

Gen. xix. 21. *See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken.* For where prayer is heard, the person is accepted too, as Gen. iv. 4. *The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering.* Job xlii. 9. *The Lord also accepted Job.*

2. His granting the requeſt, Pſal. xx. 1. 4. *The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble;—grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counſel.* The ſinner coming to God with a petition, lays it before him, and his deſire is granted. God wills it to be unto him accordingly, Matth. xv. 28 *O woman,* ſaid Chriſt to the woman of Canaan, *great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* The mercy prayed for is ordered for the ſinner, in kind or equivalent. Thus prayer is heard in heaven, heard and granted.

3. His anſwering of prayer, Pſal. cii. 2. *In the day when I call, anſwer me ſpeedily.* This is more than granting the requeſt, being a giving into the petitioner's hand what is deſired. It is an anſwer not in word to the believer's faith only, but in deed to the believer's ſenſe and feeling. Thus Hannah prayed for a child, and ſhe got one; Paul prayed for the removal of a temptation, and he got grace ſufficient to bear him out againſt it. Thus prayer heard in heaven comes back like the dove with the olive-branch of peace in her mouth.

II. I ſhall ſhew the import of God's being the hearer of prayer. Theſe comfortable truths are imported in it.

1. God in Chriſt is acceſſible to poor ſinners, 2 Cor. v. 19. *God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto them.* Though he ſits on the throne of glory, and we are guilty before him; yet he is on a throne of grace, ſo as we may have acceſs to him with our ſupplications. The flaming ſword of juſtice guards the tree of

of life, on the side of the law; so that on that part our God is a consuming fire, which sinners are not able to dwell with: yet behold him in Christ, and through the vail of his flesh he is accessible to the worst of sinners.

2. He is a sin pardoning God, Exod. xxxiv. 6. 7. *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.* Prayer is made particularly for the pardon of sin: the daily cry at the throne is, *Forgive us our debts.* If then he is the hearer of prayer, he is a sin-pardoning God. We cannot pay our debt, but God can forgive it, and will forgive it to all that come to him in Christ for forgiveness. All kinds of sin he forgives freely, Micah vii. 18. Isa. i. 18. There is no exception, but of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which in its own nature makes the guilty refuse pardon, Matth. xii. 31. The pardon is proclaimed in the gospel, Acts xiii. 38. not to encourage presumption in any, but to prevent despondency in all, Psal. cxxx. 4. *There is forgiveness with thee; that thou mayst be feared.*

3. He is an all-sufficient God, Gen. xvii. 1. *I am the Almighty God,* Heb. *all sufficient.* He is self-sufficient for himself, and all-sufficient for his creatures. If he were not so, he could not be the hearer of prayer; the needs of praying persons would soon exhaust his treasure. But though all flesh come to him for supply of their various wants, he is the hearer of prayer; he has enough for them all, to answer all their needs, come as oft as they will. He is a fountain of goodness, that never runs dry, but is ever full.

4. He is a bountiful and compassionate God, Psal. lxxxvi. 5. *Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive: and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.* He is willing and ready to communicate of his goodness and mercy to poor sinners for the supply

supply of all their needs. He is more ready to give, than we to ask: we are not straitened in him, for he is the hearer of prayer; but in our own bowels. He has laid down a method, how we are to ask; and in that method, it is ask and have, Jam i. 5. 6. 7. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.* The faith of this is necessary to acceptable prayer, Heb. xi. 6. *For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

5. He is an omnipresent and omniscient God, Psal. cxxxix 7. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?* Heb. iv. 13. *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* How else could he be the hearer of prayer? What part of the world soever the petitioner is in, whether he prays with the voice or with the heart only, God is the hearer of prayer. Idolaters might chuse high places to worship their idols in; but it is all one to the hearer of prayer, whether the petitioner be on the top of the highest mountain, or as low as the centre of the earth. Jonah was heard out of the whale's belly. Though thousands of voices be going in prayer to the throne at the same time, the infinite mind comprehends them all, and every one, as easily as if there were but one at once.

6. *Lastly*, He is a God of infinite power, Rev. iv. 8. *They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty*—. While there is such a variety of cases, that the creatures have to lay before him in prayer, he could not be the hearer of prayer, if there were any thing too hard for him to do. But nothing

is

is impoſſible with him; he calleth things that are not to be as if they were, at the voice of prayer.

III. I proceed to ſhew what prayers they are that God hears. It is not every prayer, nor every one's prayer that God hears. But it is the prayers of his children, for things agreeable to his will, made by the aſſiſtance of his Spirit, and offered through Chriſt.

1. They are the prayers of his own children, who are juſtified by faith, and reconciled to him, Jam. v. 16. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* Our Lord teaching how to pray, teaches us to call God *our Father*; which can be only through faith. Our perſons muſt be accepted in juſtification, ere any work of ours can be ſo. Where there is no peace betwixt God and the ſinner, what communion can be there? Amos iii. 3. *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* The ſcripture is plain, *God heareth not ſinners*, John ix. 31. God's way of giving graciouſly, is to give other things with Chriſt, Rom. viii. 32. *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?* It is in the covenant only that one can have a bottom for acceptance of his prayers.

Object. Then it is in vain for any to pray, but true believers. *Anſ.* There is leſs evil in praying by an unbeliever, than in his omitting it; and conſequently leſs puniſhment will be. But going to pray, go to Chriſt by faith, and ſo your prayer ſhall be accepted; and no otherwiſe.

2. They are ſuch prayers of theirs as are for things agreeable to God's will, 1 John v. 14. *This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we aſk any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* Even in ſaints there are remains of a corrupt will, and ſo it is not left to them to pray for what they pleaſe; not what is the choice of their corruption, but what is the choice of their grace. When James and John

would have prayed for fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, Christ rebuked them, and said, *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of*, Luke ix. 54. 55. Elias did it, but they might not, not having his spirit.

3. They are prayers made by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, hence called *inwrought*, Gr. Jam. v. 16. No language is acceptable in heaven, but what is learned from thence. It is not the art of prayer, but the Spirit of prayer, that is pleasing in the sight of God. The former may be reached by God's enemies, whose false heart may vent itself by a flattering tongue, as Israel did, Psal. lxxviii. 36. 37. *Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.* The latter is the peculiar privilege of God's children, yet common to them all, Gal. iv. 6. *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

4. *Lastly*, They are prayers offered to God through Christ the Mediator, the soul trusting on his merit and intercession alone for the hearing of them, Dan. ix. 17. *Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.* John xiv. 14 *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* Christ is the altar on which our spiritual sacrifices can be accepted: and it is not consistent with the honour of God, to hear the prayers of sinners otherwise.

The doctrine being thus explained in the general, I come in the next place more particularly,

1. To confirm it, and shew that there is such a thing as hearing of prayer, the privilege of the Lord's people in this lower world.

2. To shew in what manner the Lord hears prayer.

FIRST,

FIRST, I am to confirm it, and ſhew that there is ſuch a thing as hearing of prayer, the privilege of the Lord's people in this lower world God is in heaven, they are on the earth; voices from heaven, or angel-meſſengers to report the acceptance of prayers there, are not to be expected. Nevertheleſs we are ſure there is ſuch a thing ſtill in being. And it is neceſſary to prove it,

1. For the ſake of a profane generation, who as they are ſtrangers to, ſo they are deſpiſers of, communion with God.

2. For the ſake of formaliſts, who go about the duty of prayer as a taſk, but are in no concern for the fruit of it; ſend away the meſſenger, but look for no report.

3. For the ſake of diſcouraged Chriſtians, who go bowed down, becauſe they cannot perceive it as they deſire.

That God is the hearer of prayer, and will hear the prayers of his people, is evident from theſe conſiderations.

Firſt, The ſupernatural inſtinct of praying that is found in all that are born of God, Gal. iv. 6. forecited. It is as natural for them to pray, to fall a praying when the grace of God has touched their hearts, as for children when they are born into the world to cry, or to deſire the breaſts, Zech. xii. 10. *I will pour upon the houſe of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, the Spirit of grace and of ſupplications.* Compared with Acts ix. 11. where, in the account that is given of Paul, at his converſion, it is particularly noticed, *Behold, he prayeth.* Hence the whole ſaving change on a ſoul comes under the character of this inſtinct, Jer. iii. 4. 19. *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?—I ſaid, Thou ſhalt call me, My Father, and ſhalt not turn away from me.* This ſupernatural inſtinct, being the work of God in the new nature, cannot be in vain. Accordingly it is determined, Iſ. xlv. 19. *I ſaid not unto the ſeed of*

Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. But it would be a vain appetite, if it were not to be satisfied by hearing.

Secondly, The intercession of Christ, Rom. viii. 34. *It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* It is a great part of the work of Christ's intercession, to present the prayers of his people before his Father, Rev. viii. 4 to take their causes in hand contained in their supplications, 1 John ii. 1. So we find him interceding for his church of old in her low condition, Zech. i. and in the New Testament, John xvii. He is ever at the work, and cannot neglect it, Heb. vii. 25. and it cannot be without effect, John xi. 42. *I knew that thou hearest me always*, said Jesus to his Father.

Thirdly, The promises of the covenant, whereby God's faithfulness is impawned for the hearing of prayer, as Matth. vii. 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* Is. lxv. 24. *And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer, and whiles they are yet speaking, I will hear.* Psal. cxlv. 19. *He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.* The promise of hearing of prayer, is one of the great lines of the covenant, Hos. ii. 20. 21. *I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens*, &c.: and it is so proposed with his being his people's God, Zech. x. 6. *I am the Lord their God, and will hear them.*

Fourthly, The many encouragements given in the word to the people of God, to come with their cases unto the Lord by prayer. He invites them to his throne of grace with their petitions for supply of their needs, Cant. ii. 14. *O my dove that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.* He sends afflictions

afflictions for to press them to come, Hos. v. *ult. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.* He gives them ground of hope of success, Psal. l. 15. whatever extremity their case is brought to, Is. xli. 17. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.* He shews them, that however long he may delay for their trial, yet praying and not fainting shall be successful at length, Luke xviii. 8. *I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.*

Fifthly, The gracious nature of God, with the endearing relations he stands in to his people, Exod. xxii. 27. *And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear: for I am gracious.* Matth. vii. 9. 10. 11. *What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?* He wants not power and ability to fulfil the holy desires of his people; he is gracious, and will with-hold no good from them that they really need. He has the bowels of a Father to pity them, the bowels of a mother to her sucking child. He has a most tender sympathy with them in all their afflictions, the touches on them are as on the apple of his eye; and he never refuses them a request, but for their good, Rom. viii. 28.

Sixthly, The experiences which the saints of all ages have had of the answer of prayer. The faith of it brings them to God at first in conversion, as the text intimates: and they that believe cannot be disappointed. Abraham, Moses, David's, and Job's experiences of this kind are in record, with many others, Paul's, *&c.* The Psalmist sets up his case as a way-mark to all the travellers to Zion, Psal. xxxiv. 6. *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him; and*

faved him out of all his troubles. And to this day the saints experience seals the truth thereof.

Lastly, The present ease and relief that prayer sometimes gives to the saints, while yet the full answer of prayer is not come, Psal. cxxxviii. 3. *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me: and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.* The unbosoming of themselves to the Lord in prayer, comforts and strengthens the heart, 1 Sam. i. 18. This is on the faith of the Lord's hearing of prayer, Micah vii. 7. *I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.*

SECONDLY, I come to shew in what manner the Lord hears prayer. For clearing of this, I lay down the following observations thereon.

FIRST, A thing desired of God may be obtained, and yet the prayer not heard and accepted, as in Israel's case, Psal. lxxviii. 29. *So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire.* For as it is plain on the one hand, that sinners out of Christ may sometimes obtain a thing they pray for, as in the case of the Ninevites, it is as plain on the other, that no prayer of theirs can be accepted of God, according to John ix. 31. *God heareth not sinners.* It is one thing to get a thing prayed for, another to get it as an answer of accepted prayer, Psal. lxxviii. 34—38. Now this falls out in two cases.

1. When the thing prayed for is given downright in wrath, as it was in the case of the Israelites seeking a king, Hos. xiii. 11. *I gave thee a king in mine anger.* Men often need no more to ruin them, but to get their will; and God may give it them with a vengeance. They get their desire, but it is far from being accepted; for it is in anger it comes to them.

2. When it is given in the way of uncovenanted condescendence. Thus sinners out of Christ may get particular requests of theirs answered, as Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 29. For though God does not accept their persons, nor any performance of theirs; yet he may

may ſhew regard to his own ordinance of prayer, and therefore make it not fruitleſs even to them. And thus the Lord does to train on ſinners to the yielding themſelves to him, and to depending on him by faith and prayer, Hoſ. xi. 3. *I taught Ephraim alſo to go, taking them by their arms.*

Anſwers of accepted prayer come in the way of the covenant of grace, but theſe in the way of common providence. And they may be diſcerned by theſe attending ſigns.

(1.) Wilfulneſs and unhumbledneſs of ſpirit in aſking; 1 Sam. viii. 19. *Nevertheleſs, the people refuſed to obey the voice of Samuel; and they ſaid, Nay, but we will have a king over us.* When one's will is peremptory, and is not brought to a holy ſubmiſſion to God in the matter, but they will wring the mercy out of God's hand, and have it at any rate, whether with or without his good will; be ſure that is what comes in the way of common providence only.

(2.) Strengthening and feeding of luſts by them when received, Pſal. lxxviii. 29. 30. Hence on ſuch receipts men commonly grow worſe, and their mercies are ſhort lived: being greedily ſnatched off the tree of providence, ere they are ripe, their teeth are ſet on edge with them, ver. 30. 31.

(3.) A frame of ſpirit, in aſking and receiving, not of the mould of the goſpel, but of the law; whereby more ſtreſs is laid upon our own neceſſity, than on the interceſſion of Chriſt; there is much deſire of the mercy, but no believing dependence on the Lord for it in the promiſe as a free promiſe through Chriſt; and ordinarily it leaves the heart fixed on the gift, and does not carry it back to the Giver.

Secondly, A prayer may be heard and accepted, and yet the deſire of it not granted. That is to ſay, God may be pleaſed with, and accept of the prayer as ſervice to him; and yet may ſee meet not to grant the

the thing prayed for. Even as a father going to correct one of his children, may be very well pleased with another child of his interposing for sparing, though he may not see it meet to forbear for all that.

The truth of this is put out of doubt, in the case of Jesus Christ himself, Matth. xxvi. 39. who prayed, saying, *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Compare Heb. v. 7. *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared.* If it was so done with the Head, no wonder it be so with the members too, as David, 2 Chron. vi. 8. 9. *But the Lord said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart: notwithstanding, thou shalt not build the house, but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name.* A thing may be very agreeable to the command of God, to be prayed for, which yet may be otherwise ordered in the holy wise providence of God. It is one thing what he requires of us by his revealed will, another what in his secret will he minds to do, Deut. xxix. *ult. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

Now of prayers accepted and not granted, it is to be observed,

1. They are not absolute and peremptory, but with holy submission to the divine pleasure, as of our Lord's, Matth. xxvi. 39. If we pray absolutely, for what God has not so promised, and such a prayer is not granted, it is not accepted neither. So all that this amounts to is, that God sees meet to refuse what the petitioner did seek, but with submission to his will either to grant or refuse it.

2. Where

2. Where a prayer is accepted and not granted, there is in the bosom of the denial an unseen greater mercy. Had that cup passed from Christ, where had been the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the salvation of an elect world, that was wrapt up in the denial of that sinless desire of Christ's holy human nature? Had David's child lived for whom he prayed, he had been a lasting stain on his father's reputation: but God refused David's petition in that, where the refusal was a greater mercy, than the granting would have been.

3. Hence that treatment of such prayers is agreeable to the chief scope and aim of the petitioner, which is God's glory and his own good. This is the design of believers in all their accepted prayers, which being agreeable to the promise, there is no jarring there betwixt God and them. Only, they in this case look on such a thing as they pray for to be the most proper mean for that end; God sees it is not, and therefore refuses it. So all that this amounts to is, as if one should desire one to lead him such a way to such a place; he refuses not to lead him to the place, but he will not lead him that way, but a nearer and better way.

Quest. How may I know such prayers of mine to be accepted, when they are not granted?

Ans. 1. When the heart is brought to submit to the denial as a holy and righteous dispensation, Psal. xxii. 2. 3. *O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.* When the sinner from his heart clears the Hearer of prayer, leaving his complaint on his unworthy self, such an effect is an argument of prayer accepted, though not granted.

2. When though the thing be denied, yet divine support under the denial is granted, and made forthcoming: Luke xxii. 42. 43. Christ having prayed, saying, *Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from*

from me; nevertheleſs, not my will, but thine be done: there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, ſtrengthening him. And he was carried through all his ſufferings by his Father, ſo that he was victorious over death itſelf. Thus often God, denying the petitions of his children, with reſpect to temptations, troubles, *&c.* yet teſtifies his acceptance of their prayers by the ſupports given under the ſame, Pſal. cxxxviii. 3. *In the day when I cried,* ſays David, *thou anſweredſt me; and ſtrengthenedſt me with ſtrength in my ſoul.*

3. *Laſtly,* When ſuch a ſoul is helped to go back to the ſame God with new petitions in faith and hope of hearing, 2 Sam. xii. 20. *Then David aroſe from the earth, and waſhed, and anointed himſelf, and changed his apparel, and came into the houſe of the Lord, and worſhipped.* This argues a faith of the promiſe of all's working together for good, Rom. viii. 28. a leaving a latitude of diſpenſation to ſovereignty, well becoming a ſubmiſſive and reſigned petitioner.

THIRDLY, The deſire of a prayer may be heard and granted, and yet it may be long ere it be anſwered. That is to ſay, all prayers not anſwered to our ſenſe and feeling, are not loſt; they may ſtand granted in heaven, and yet it may be many a day ere the anſwer of them come to us. A prayer may be granted, and yet the mercy prayed for be ſtill with-held, ſo that the petitioner may be obliged to ſend new petitions day by day for it ſtill.

I ſhall firſt confirm this, and then ſhew why it may be ſo ordered.

Firſt, To confirm the truth of this, conſider,

1. Scripture-inſtances. Abraham prayed for an heir, it was granted, Gen. xv. 3. 4. yet it was more than thirteen years before that prayer was anſwered, in the birth of Iſaac, Gen. xvii. 25. So the Iſraelites in Egypt, Exod. ii. 23. 24. and Daniel, chap. ix. 23. Such inſtances are recorded for our learning.

2. There

2. There is a difference betwixt the granting of a petition, and the intimation of that grant to us; betwixt Heaven's order for our getting of the mercy, and the execution of it. The one is the hearing and grant of prayer, the other is the anſwer: and though theſe ſometimes may come both in one inſtant, as Matth. xv. 28. *Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt: and her daughter was made whole from that very hour*; yet often they are at a great diſtance of time, as in Abraham's caſe.

3. The hearing and granting of prayer is an object of faith, the anſwer of prayer an object of ſenſe and feeling, 1 John v. 14. 15. Matth. xv. 28. A prayer made through the aſſiſtance of the Spirit, according to the will of God, and offered to God through Chriſt, is heard and granted in that inſtant wherein it is made: and this is what we are to believe, on the ground of the faithfulneſs of God in the promiſe, before we get the anſwer to our ſenſe and feeling; for *faith is the ſubſtance of things not ſeen*, and *we walk by faith, not by ſight*; and therefore this is the ordinary way to put the grant and anſwer at ſome diſtance of time, though not always, If. lxv. 24.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew why the anſwers of prayers heard and granted, are kept up for a time, and may be for a long time.

1. To keep the petitioners hanging on about the throne of grace, Prov. xv. 8 *The prayer of the upright is his delight*. The Lord by this means gives them many errands to the throne, ſo that they muſt always be going back again, and renewing their ſuits. So fathers make their little children follow them, and hang about them, and ſpeak to them as they can: and no father has ſuch delight in the company and converſe of his children, as God has in his, Cant. ii. 14.

2. For the trial of their graces, Jam. i. 12. *Bleſſed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is*

is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. This life is the time of trial, and God's with-holding for a time the answers of granted prayers, is a piece of trial that will go in through and out through the child of God. It tries their sincerity and earnestness for an answer, Job xxvii. 10. with Luke xviii. 7; their patience and disposition to wait on God, Hab. ii. 3.; their hope in God, Psal. cxlvii. 11. & xlii. 5.; especially it tries their faith in the word of promise, and that is a trial of great estimation in the sight of God, 1 Pet. i. 6. 7. *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations. That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.* Every new act of faith in the word, is more valuable than all the famed exploits of carnal selfish men; especially when faith keeps hold of the promise like a rope in the water, while providence is bringing one wave after another over the man's head, Psal. lvi. 10. So Matth. xv. 21.—28.

3. Till they be prepared and fitted for receiving the answer, Psal. x. 17. *Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.* Mercies we need, but we are not at all times meet to receive them. God gives his left-hand gifts to strangers, in the way of common providence, whether they be prepared for them or not: and hence many are ruined getting much laid to their hand, before they have the grace or wisdom to manage it, for God's honour and their own good. But his right-hand gifts to his children, in the way of the covenant, though they be ready for them, yet he will keep them back till they be made ready and prepared for them too. So he is at pains to humble them, and work them for that thing. Saul was brought to the kingdom easily, but David not so.

4. *Lastly,*

4. *Laſtly*, Till the beſt time come, for their getting it, when it may come to them with the greateſt advantage, Eccl. iii. 14. *I know that whatſoever God doth, it ſhall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doth it, that men ſhould fear before him.* There is much in the timing of a favour; the ſame thing may be worth double to a man at one time, beyond what it will be at another. And be ſure, if God is keeping back the anſwer of a granted prayer, he is only reſerving till the beſt time of beſtowing it, John xi. 14. 15. & ii. 4.

Queſt. How may a Chriſtian know his prayer is heard and granted, while yet it is not anſwered?

Anſw. 1. If ye have prayed in faith, no doubt your petition is heard and granted, though it ſhould not be anſwered for ever ſo long after, Matth. xxi. 22. *All things whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in prayer, believing, ye ſhall receive.* God refuſes not, nor rejects any prayer for things agreeable to his will, made in faith of the promiſe, through the aſſiſtance of the Spirit, and offered to him through his Son. And ye ought to believe, that ſuch prayers are granted, but that God for holy wiſe ends delays the anſwer.

2. If ye are ſtrengthened to hang on about the Lord's hand, for the anſwer, hoping and waiting for the Lord, Pſal. cxxxviii. 3. It is a certain truth, which ye may build upon, Gal. vi. 9. *In due ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not.* This is the very character of an elect believer, on his trials for glory, Luke xviii. 7. *Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?* Granted prayer brings ſomething in hand, namely, grace to wait on, Pſal. xxvii. *ult. Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he ſhall ſtrengthen thine heart: wait, I ſay, on the Lord.* Compare ver. 13. *I had fainted, unleſs I had believed to ſee the goodneſs of the Lord in the land of the living.*

3. *Laſtly*, It is a good ſign when ye are encoura-

ged to wait for the desired answer, by the Lord's answering you in other things that fall out in the mean time of the delay. For the Lord lays these to your hand to support your faith and hope in point of the delayed answer. How was David's faith of the promise of the kingdom kept up, so many years during Saul's reign? Why, David in that time had many experiences of answers of prayer, and fulfilling of promises in other things, as Psal. xxxiv. 6. *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him; and saved him out of all his troubles.*

FOURTHLY, Prayers accepted and granted, shall certainly be answered to the believer's sense and feeling at length. The answer may be delayed, but it cannot be forgotten, nor miscarried. Such prayers will surely be turned into praise at long-run; and faith will bring in sense and feeling, when it is tried a while.

I shall first confirm the truth of this, and then shew when they shall be so answered to their sense and feeling.

First, To confirm this, consider,

1. The interest the Mediator has in the matter, which secures and puts it beyond doubt. It is upon his merit that the prayer is accepted, on his intercession that it is granted: so that he is nearly concerned in the obtaining of the answer: and then he is the great Steward in heaven, into whose hands the whole fulness of covenant-benefits for sinners supply is put. How then can it fail, when the mercy petitioned for, is lodged in the hand of our Intercessor for it?

2. The faithfulness of God in his word, Psal. lxxxix. 8. *O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?* This stands as a rock immoveable in all the changes that befal his people. His word must be accomplished, and his promise fulfilled, whatever stand in the way of it. Heaven and earth shall rather be removed than it fail, or fall a minute behind the set time of its bringing

bringing forth, Hab. ii. 3. *For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

3. The love and pity God has to his children that cry to him. *His ears are open to their cry*, Psal. xxxiv. 15. He forgets it not, Psal. ix. 12. As he is their God, so he will be *a God to them*, as the expression is, 1 Chron. xvii. 24. namely, to do the part of a God to them; that is, to hear and answer their prayers.

4. *Lastly*, Such prayers are the product of his own Spirit in them, Rom. viii. 26. And be sure, the mouths that he opens, he will fill; the holy appetite and desires that he creates in them, he will satisfy.

Secondly, I shall shew when they shall be answered to their sense and feeling. There are two periods in general, wherein God gives answers of prayers accepted and granted. Answers of prayer are given,

1. In time, during the petitioner's life in this world, Psal. lviii. *ult. Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.* Believers in this life have communion with God, and do get answers of prayer, as provision allowed them of their Father, for their journey through the wilderness. But one may wait a long time of his life, for an answer of some prayers, and ere he go off be made to say, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*, Luke ii. 29. 30.

Of the seasons of life for answers of prayer, we may say in the general, there are four seasons thereof.

(1.) A time of the Lord's return to a church and people from whom he had hid his face, Psal. cii. 16. 17. *When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.* The children may cry long to their Father, ere he let on he notices

them, when he is angry with their mother: but when he is pleased with her, they get speedy answers from him, Dan. ix. 1. 2. 23. Times of reformation, and outpouring of the Spirit on a land, are times of answers of prayer to particular persons: which should move us to carry along the public case, with our private cases, as David did, Psal. li. 18. 19. *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem*, &c.

(2.) A time of greatest extremity, when matters are carried to the utmost point of hopelessness, Deut. xxxii. 36. *For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.* When God's people are brought to that, they can do no more, then is the special season of God's doing for them, Is. xli. 17. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.* When the child was laid by for dead, the well was discovered. When the knife was at Isaac's throat, the answer comes from heaven, *Stay thine hand.* A sentence of death is often passed on all probable means, the thing is put as it were in the grave, and the stone sealed: and then comes the resurrection of it, 2 Cor. i. 8. 9. 10. Psal. cxxvi. 1. *When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.*

(3.) A time of the petitioner's deepest humiliation, when he is beat down from all his heights, and brought as low as the dust of the Lord's feet, as in Job's case, chap. xlii. 6. 7. *&c.* and the woman of Canaan's, Matth. xv. 27. 28. It is the Lord's way with his children to lay them very low, before he raise them up; to empty them soundly of themselves, before he fill them. They must be made to see their own utter unworthiness, that God is no debtor to them, be wholly resigned to the divine pleasure, and become as a weaned child. And that may cost much hewing;

hewing; but it is the way they are prepared for mercy, Pſal. x. 17.

(4.) *Laſtly*, A time wherein the mercy may come moſt ſeaſonably for God's honour and their comfort, Gal. vi. 9 *In due ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not.* The huſbandman expects to reap his crop in the harveſt, for that is the moſt proper ſeaſon. Our God is the beſt judge of time for this or that purpoſe, and he does all in judgement, Deut. xxxii. 4. So that the petitioner ſhall be fully ſatisfied as to the delay of the anſwer, and the whole ſteps of providence in the matter, and be made to ſing as Rev. xv. 3. ſaying, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty; juſt and true are thy ways, thou King of ſaints.*

2. In eternity, when the believing petitioner is got into another world, then will be a ſeaſon of anſwers of prayer, Mal. iii. 17. 18. *They ſhall be mine, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will ſpare them as a man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth him. Then ſhall ye return and diſcern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that ſerveth God, and him that ſerveth him not.* I do not ſay, they will pray in another world, but prayers poured out in this world will be anſwered in another world, partly after death, and fully and completely at the reſurrection. For conſider,

(1.) There are accepted and granted prayers that are never anſwered on this ſide of time; yet they cannot miſs to be anſwered, Pſal. ix. 18. *For the needy ſhall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor ſhall not periſh for ever.* Therefore they are anſwered in eternity. Such is that prayer of all the children of God, Rom. vii. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death!* the complete victory over all their enemies, and being ſet beyond their reach, which is delayed till the reſurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 26. *The laſt enemy that ſhall be deſtroyed, is death.*

(2.) There are prayers that are answered here in part, but are not fully answered till the petitioner comes into another world. The prayers for the coming of Christ's kingdom are begun to be answered now, but they will not be fully answered till the last day. Petitions for deliverance from temptation, the power of lusts and corruptions, are answered so as an earnest is given, but the full answer is till then in reserve, Rom. xvi. 20. *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*

(3.) *Lastly*, All the accepted prayers of those that wait for the Lord, whether for their souls or their bodies, will be at once answered in heaven fully: there the promises will be told out to them for ever in full tale. There are many prayers for deliverance from temptations, trials, and troubles, which God sees not meet to answer now; but they will be all answered at once then, Rev. xxi. 4. *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

Therefore, let none think that all the prayers are lost, that are not answered during this life: for prayers here made in faith, may be delayed as to their answer, till the petitioner come home to his Father's house: and there will be a second crop there of prayers answered here.

Quest. When an answer of prayer comes, how shall it be known to be an answer of accepted and granted prayer, and not come in the way of common providence?

Answ. 1. Mercies that come so make the soul more holy, tender, and watchful, whereas others prove snares and fewel to mens lusts, Psal. vi. 8. *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.* Common providence filled the rich man's barns, then said he, *Soul, take thine ease.*

2. They

2. They enlarge the ſoul in thankfulneſs to God, Pſal. cxvi. 1. 12. *I love the Lord, becauſe he hath heard my voice, and my ſupplications. What ſhall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me?* And they make it to rejoice more in the Giver, than in the gift, 1 Sam. ii. 1. *My heart rejoiceth in the Lord.* The ſignature of God's good-will that is upon the mercy, makes it of a great bulk, though it may be a ſmall thing in itſelf, Gen. xxxiii. 10. *I have ſeen thy face,* ſaid Jacob to Eſau, *as though I had ſeen the face of God, and thou waſt pleaſed with me.* Thus coming from God in the way of the covenant, it leads back to God: but others not ſo.

3. *Laſtly,* They come ſeaſonably, the heart being in ſome meaſure prepared for the receipt, Pſal. x. 17. when the ſoul is moulded in a ſubmiſſive diſpoſition. Exerciſed ſouls will be afraid of a mercy's coming too ſoon.

FIFTHLY, God anſwers prayer, either by giving the very thing itſelf aſked, or the equivalent of it. As a man may pay his bond, either in money, or money-worth. So there are two ways of God's fulfilling his promiſes, and anſwering his people's prayers.

1. Sometimes God anſwers prayer by giving the very thing deſired. So he anſwered Hannah's prayer for a child, and Solomon's prayer for wiſdom. And what comes that way will bear much bulk in the eyes of a gracious ſoul, becauſe of the good-will of God that is ſtamped on it, whereby it is diſtinguiſhed from what comes in the common road.

And what comes that way, readily comes with a good incaſt to it, eſpecially if the petitioner has been kept long hanging on for it. Such an incaſt got Solomon, 2 Chron. i. 12. *Wiſdom and knowledge is granted unto thee, and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, ſuch as none of the kings have had, that have been before thee, neither ſhall there any after thee have the like.* They that wait long for their anſwer, ordinarily get as it were both the ſtock and intereſt

tereſt together. So Abraham and Sarah waited long for the promiſed ſeed, even till they were come to extreme old age: and then they got it with a renewing of their age.

2. Sometimes by giving, though not the thing itſelf, yet the equivalent of it, that which is as good; as one may pay his bond, by giving, though not money, yet what is as good as money. Thus though God did not give David the child's life, yet he gave him a Solomon, a mercy as good and better. Paul, though he got not free of the temptation at his aſking, yet he got grace ſufficient to bear him up under it, 2 Cor. xii. 9.

And God's as-good that he gives his people, will readily be found better, all things conſidered. That is beſt which is beſt for God's honour and our good, and God knows better than we what is moſt ſuitable to theſe purpoſes. It would have been more eaſy for Paul, to have been freed from the meſſenger of Satan; but it was more for God's honour and his ſpiritual good, to be helped to fight that meſſenger and overcome.

Learn then, that your prayers may be anſwered, though ye get not the very thing ye aſk. Though God anſwer you not in kind, if he anſwer you in kindneſs, ye have no reaſon to ſay your prayer is not heard. If he take not off your burden, yet if he gives you ſupport, he hears you, Pſal. cxxxviii. 3. There are two ways how God gives his people as good.

(1) Sometimes he gives them as good in the ſame kind; though he gives them not the ſame temporal mercy they would have had, he gives them another of the ſame kind as good as it. Though he gave not David the life of the child he aſked, he gave him a Solomon. So God reſerves to himſelf the chuſing.

(2) Sometimes he gives them as good in another kind; as not giving them ſuch a temporal mercy, he gives them a ſpiritual mercy and enjoyment in the room of it: and ſurely there is no loſs there.

Queſt.

Queſt. How may one know that God anſwers his prayer, by giving him the as-good?

Anſw. 1. When that which is given anſwers or ſerves the purpoſe as well as the thing deſired would have done. David deſired the child's life as a token of God's reconciliation with him; but Solomon's birth anſwered the ſame purpoſe, 2 Sam. xii. 24 25. So there was no loſs as to the main thing in view.

2. When the heart is brought to reſt contented with what is given, in the room of what was deſired. So Moſes was ſufficed with a ſight of the land from Piſgah, inſtead of entering into it. When the thing given takes the heart off what is with-held, it is a ſign it comes as an anſwer of prayer by the way of an as-good.

3. When a perſon is to his own conviction a gainer by the choice God makes for him. Thus the Lord ſometimes anſwers his people's prayers in trouble for deliverance, by giving them manifeſtations of his love and mercy, which they would not have gotten if the trouble had been removed, Lam. iii. 57. *Thou dreweſt near in the day that I called upon thee: thou ſaidſt, Fear not.*

Sixthly, God's anſwer of prayer ſometimes agrees with the expreſſion uſed in prayer, though not with the preconceived deſign and deſire of the petitioner. There is a ſpecial help of the Spirit allowed God's people in prayer, beyond what they have otherwiſe, Rom. viii. 26. Hence going to God on ſuch a particular errand, they are ſometimes carried ſo to expreſs their deſire, that the anſwer agrees exactly to the expreſſion uſed in the petition, though the petition as expreſſed doth ſwerve ſomewhat from what they intended.

It will therefore be profitable on the receiving an anſwer of prayer, to compare it with the expreſſion in which the petition was made: and the harmony betwixt them being obſerved, will ſet the matter of the anſwer in a clear light.

Lastly,

Lastly, One mercy may be the answer of the prayers of many. Whether it be a public mercy to a society, or a private mercy to a particular person, it may be given in answer to the prayers of many, and many may take the comfort of that answer. As when the prayers of a congregation are heard, or a mercy is given which many have privately prayed for, though the answer is one, it may belong to many.

Quest. How may one know that in such a case there has been any regard had to his prayer for the mercy?

Answ. 1. If thy heart did join in prayer for the mercy, with others, thy affections being touched with earnest desire of the mercy, thy soul lifted up to depend on the merit and intercession of Christ for the granting it, thou needest not doubt but it is an answer to thy prayer as well as to others, Matth. xviii. 19. *I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

2. If thou findest thy heart enlarged in thankfulness to God for the mercy when it is obtained, that is another evidence that it is an answer to thy prayer as well as others, 2 Cor. iv. 15. *For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God.* Many a prayer had been put up for the coming of the Messiah; Simeon when he saw him is transported with thankfulness of heart, as having obtained his desire, Luke ii. 29.

I shall now shut up this subject with some practical improvement.

Use I. of information. Hence see,

1. How much we poor sinners stand indebted to free grace providing a Saviour for us. We could have had no access with our prayers to an absolute God; justice would have barred our acceptance. So fallen angels have no access to God allowed them; for

for Christ took not on their nature. But great is our privilege in this point, 1 John ii. 1. For *if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

2. The hainousness of the sin of neglecting prayer. A price is put in mens hands to get wisdom, but they have no heart to it. The door of mercy and grace stands open, but they will not come to it: God sits on a throne of grace, ready to answer petitions; but they have none to put in his hand.

3. The impiety and profaneness that is in abusing of prayer, making a scorn of it in ordinary conversation, as *God pity you, help you, bless us, save us*, &c. How lamentable is it, that the name of God, and the ordinance of prayer, should be thus prostituted to the lusts of men at every trifle! The day will come, when God's pity, help, *&c.* which ye make so light of now, will appear more valuable than ten thousand worlds, and ye shall not have them, if ye repent not of that contempt which ye now treat them with.

4. The folly of those who are in no concern for the hearing of their prayers. Surely, they forsake their own mercy. Ye would have little satisfaction in your meat, if it did not feed you; in your cloaths, if they did not keep you warm. What satisfaction then can ye have in your praying, if ye cannot find it is heard?

5. *Lastly*, This shews why serious souls do so much value prayer, and betake themselves thereto in all their straits. Slight it who will, it will not be slighted by those who have experience of the Lord's hearing their prayers, Micah vii. 7. *I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.* Daniel was such a man; and he would rather venture on the den of lions, than forego his praying to God. The neglect of it, is a sign of unacquaintedness with that.

Use II. Of direction and comfort to the people of God,

God, in all the trials and troubles they meet with in the world. Here is your course ye should take, Go to God with your case, whatever it be, and make your prayer to him about it, Phil. iv. 6. *Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.* Here is your comfort, God is the hearer of prayer, Is. xlv. 19. *I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.* There are four things I would suggest to you here for your direction and comfort.

1. God has made the way to heaven lie through many tribulations, that his children might have the more errands to his throne of grace. That this is the path-road to the kingdom of God, is clear from scripture-testimony, Acts xiv. 22.—*we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God;* John xvi. *ult. In the world ye shall have tribulation;* and the experience of Christ the head, and the saints in all ages. That this is the design of it, appears also from the word, Hos. v. *ult. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.* Prosperity seldom fails to issue in forgetting of God, Deut. xxxii. 15. Adversity causes to feel a need of his help, Zeph. iii. 12. So God keeps the thorn of affliction at the breast of his people, to keep them waking, and sends the cross to invite them to the throne of grace.

2. The way to heaven in that respect never alters, though the external circumstances of the church in the world do alter Sometimes there is persecution in the church, sometimes peace; but in the most peaceable time of the church, God's people shall go through the world to the kingdom through much tribulation. The seed of the serpent will vent their enmity one way or other against the people of God, though they have not law on their side to bear them out in persecuting them. God will have his people tried,

tried, and caused to suffer in their bodies, goods, liberty, and life, if not by the hands of persecutors, yet by his own hand one way or other. For that is a perpetual rule, Matth. xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* Luke xiv. 26. *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.* So there is no change, but only as to the means and instruments of trial.

3. Whatever be your trial, whether it be in temporal or spiritual things, ye are welcome to the throne of grace with it, Phil. iv. 6. forecited. Whether it come on you immediately from the hand of God, or men, ye may carry it to God by prayer, and pour out your heart before him as a prayer-hearing God, in confidence that he can help you, and will do it in due time.

4. The more trials and afflictions God's people meet with, the more experience readily they will be found to have of God's hearing of prayer, Rom. v. 3 4. *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.* Of all the patriarchs Jacob had the manifest trials, and accordingly was richest in experiences. The more battles the Christian soldier is engaged in, the more is he enriched with spoil. The Israelites had not sung that triumphant song recorded Exod. xv. had they not been in that great strait at the Red sea.

Use last, of exhortation. Then,

1. Improve your privilege of access to God through Christ in prayer. Since God has cast open the gates of mercy, come enter in by them: since he is saying to you, *What is thy petition, and it shall be granted thee?* slight not the golden season of petitioning. Consider,

(1.) Your need is great. Whatever ye have or

want in temporals, surely ye need a resting-place for your conscience and for your heart: you need something to make you happy in time and eternity.

(2) The whole creation cannot answer your needs. There is an emptiness in every creature, that it cannot be a resting-place to you, Is. lv. 2. The soul is of such a make, that no less than an infinite good can satisfy it. Only God in Christ can make you happy.

(3.) He offers to supply all your needs, Psal. lxxxi. 10. *I am the Lord thy God;—open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* Ask in faith, and ye shall receive.

(4.) *Lastly*, This door of access will not always stand open, Matth. xxv. 10 11. 12. *And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.* Now is the accepted time.

2. Be concerned for God's hearing of your prayers: look after them, and see what speed they come. There are two things wherein this concern should appear.

(1.) In making your addresses to the throne of grace, being careful so to manage that as ye may be accepted. They who are rash in their approaches to God, and careless how their petitions are formed and presented, cannot be duly concerned for a hearing of them. Labour therefore so to pray, as your prayers may be heard and accepted.

(2.) In depending and waiting on after prayer for an answer, Psal. v. 3. *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.* Do not drop your suits, but insist for an answer, depending for it on the promise of God in his word.

Thus far of God's hearing of prayer. I shall shut up this with a word to another doctrine for the use of the whole.

Doct.

DOCT. *Such is the glory of God as the Hearer of prayer in Christ, that it will make all flesh that discerns it come unto him.*

Here I shall shew,

I. What is that glory of God as the Hearer of prayer in Christ, that is so attractive.

II. How this glory of God in Christ is discerned by a sinner.

III. What that coming unto God is, that is the effect of discerning that glory.

IV. *Lastly*, Deduce an inference or two.

I. I am to shew what is that glory of God as the Hearer of prayer in Christ, that is so attractive. It is twofold.

1. The glory of his all-sufficiency, Gen. xvii. 1. *I am God all-sufficient.* He is not only all-sufficient for himself, but for his creatures: if he were not so, he could not be the hearer of prayer. But sinners in the darkness of their natural state discern it not: they cannot comprehend what way he can be so, and therefore they traverse the round of the creation, seeking in the creature that sufficiency; till the light of the glory of God's all sufficiency shine into their hearts in Christ. Then it shines unto them with a threefold ray of glory.

(1.) An absolute suitableness to their case, which must needs be very glorious in their eyes, since that is what they were always seeking, but could never find before, according to that, Is. lv. 2. *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* Therefore with the wise merchant they *sell all to buy the one pearl*, Matth. xiii. 45. 46. The heart of man is an empty, hungry thing, going among the creatures seeking a match for itself, in which it may rest: but there they can-

not find it; but discovering it in a God in Christ, they are attracted with the glory of that sight.

(2.) A complete fulness for them, Col. i. 19. *For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.* In his all-sufficiency the soul sees the fulness of a Godhead, an infinite boundless fulness, to answer and satisfy the boundless desires of an immortal soul. That is a fountain for the thirsty soul to drink at to the full; a treasure to enrich the soul oppressed with poverty; a salve for all its sores, and a remedy for all its wounds. So it cannot miss to attract.

(3.) An ability to help in all possible incidents, Heb. vii. 25. *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* The arm of the creature is weak in all cases, and quite too short in many cases; but so is not the arm of an all-sufficient God, Is. lix. 1. *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save: neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.* There is nothing too hard for him, there is nothing that Omnipotency can stick at. Who can but draw towards such a one for a Friend?

2. The glory of his free grace and good-will to poor sinners; hence the heavenly host sang, Luke ii. 14. *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.* When the Lord would shew Moses his glory, he proclaimed the name of the Lord before him, Exod. xxxiv. 6. 7. *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.* The glory of all-sufficiency may attract the desire of sinners; but the sinner cannot come to him, while that treasure appears to be locked up from him, a gulf fixed betwixt him and it. But when once an all-sufficient God appears in the glory of his free grace in Christ, the treasure appears open to the sinner, there is a bridge for him laid over the gulf: and so

ſo he comes freely away to God in Chriſt. This ſhines to the coming ſinner with a threefold ray of glory.

(1.) Readineſs to forgive ſin, Pſal. cxxx. 4. 7. 8. *But there is forgiveneſs with thee: that thou mayſt be feared. Let Iſrael hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he ſhall redeem Iſrael from all his iniquities.* He is gracious to pardon the ſins for which he might juſtly condemn the ſinner: he is willing to be reconciled to offenders, and receive them into peace, 2 Cor. v. 19. This is an attractive glory where the conſcience is awakened.

(2.) Willingneſs to give and communicate all that is needful to make the ſinner happy, Rev. xxi. 7. *He that overcometh ſhall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he ſhall be my ſon.* He is gracious to give, as well as to forgive, Hoſ. xiv. 2.; not only to lay by his wrath againſt the ſinner, but to load him with benefits.

(3.) And all this freely, without any view to any worth in the creature, as Iſ. lv. 1. *Ho, every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.* No condition, no qualification is required: only the ſinner is welcome to take and have, whatever he has been.

II. The next thing is to ſhew, how this glory of God in Chriſt is diſcerned by a ſinner.

1. The mean of diſcerning it is the goſpel, 2 Cor. iii. *ult. Beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord.* As by means of light in the air we diſcern bodily objects, ſo by the means of the goſpel we diſcern this glory of God, 2 Cor. iv. 4. By the law we diſcern the glory of an abſolute God terrifying and confounding to a ſinner, but by the goſpel the glory of God as in Chriſt, attracting and refreſhing to a ſinner.

It is as a looking-glass wherein we see the image of things, 2 Cor. iii. *ult.* It brings before us the lovely image of a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

2. The organ or instrument of discerning it is faith, Hab. iv. 2. Though there be full light in the air, and the looking-glass presenting the beautiful image of a person, be set before one's face, if the man's eyes be out, he cannot discern it. So the glory of God in Christ is held forth unto men in the gospel; but they are spiritually blind who are unbelievers, they perceive it not, 1 Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* But faith sees the glory, John i. 14. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.*

3. The author of sinners discerning it is the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. *ult.* It is he that illuminates the dark mind, that cures sinners of their natural blindness. He works faith in the soul, brings home the gospel-report to the sinner in particular, demonstrating it to be the word of God, and God's word to him in particular, and so makes the soul embrace it by believing it, Is. liii. 1.

III. The third head is to shew what that coming unto God is, that is the effect of discerning that glory. The sinner discerning the glory of God in Christ as the Hearer of prayer,

1. He comes away from all other doors, which before he used to hang about for supply. He despairs at length of coming speed there, Jer. iii. 22. 23. *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings: behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains:*

tains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. The light of the glory of God shining into his heart, discovers the emptiness of all the poor shifts the sinner makes to get supply in his natural state of blindness.

(1.) He comes away from the door of the empty creation, where he had long laboured to find a rest; and despairs of finding it there any more. The profits, pleasures, comforts, and conveniencies of this world, appear lying vanities that can never give rest to the heart; and they must have another portion, Jer. xvi. 19. *O Lord, my strength and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.*

(2.) From the door of sin, where he expected a satisfaction in the fulfilling of his lusts; and he despairs of ever finding it there, Job xxxiii 27. He finds that puddle-water will not quench his thirst, that the pleasure of it is but short, but the pain and sting of it lasting.

(3.) From out of the world lying in wickedness, 2 Cor. vi. 17. as he would escape away from lions dens and mountains of leopards, Cant. iv. 8. He despairs of ever finding his account in the way of the world.

2. He comes away unto God in Christ, for all, and instead of all, Jer. iii. 22. *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* And he comes unto him,

(1.) As a Saviour, that will save his submissive supplicants, Jer. iii. 22. 23. Faith apprehends him as God our Saviour, and so comes to him and trusts on him for salvation, from sin and from wrath, Matth. i. 21. *Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

(2.) As a portion, that will eternally make up impoverished and ruined creatures, Psal. cxlii. 5. and

in

in which the poor petitioner may find what he has so long sought for in vain, in the world and the way of sin.

(3.) As his resort for ever in all his needs, whatever they shall be, Psal lxxi. 3. The soul coming unto God, comes to him as one that will never go back to another, but will hang on about his door, though he should die at it.

I conclude with an inference or two.

1. Whoso come not unto God in Christ, as a Saviour, *&c.* are certainly ignorant of him, and see him not in his glory: *For they that know thy name*, says the psalmist, *will put their trust in thee*, Psal. ix. 10.

2. Great and powerful must that glory be, which draws sinners from all other doors unto God. By nature we are backward to come unto God; it must be a very ravishing glory that has such an effect on perverse sinners.

3. *Lastly*, Be concerned to discern that glory; to discern it by faith, and by experience, in order to your coming to him as your Saviour, portion, and continual resort.

ON

ON ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD.

The Doctrine of the Acceptance of Mens Works explained, and a practical Regard thereto in all the Duties of Life inculcated.

The ſubſtance of ſeveral Sermons preached at Etterick in the year 1726.

2 Cor. viii. 12.

For if there be firſt a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

THE Chriſtians in Judea being in much diſtreſs and poverty, there was a contribution through the churches of the Gentiles for them. The communion of ſaints extends not only to ſpiritual, but temporal things too; that they be ready to help one another out of their ſubſtance. And this communication of worldly things to the ſupply of the ſaints, is not confined to thoſe of our own church; but is to be extended to ſtrangers on occaſion, at the greateſt diſtance. The goſpel came from Judea to the Gentiles; and now money muſt go from the Gentiles for the relief of thoſe of Judea. Hereby God took a trial of the Gentile churches their love to and eſteem of the goſpel. Many will pretend to great eſteem of the goſpel, but they muſt have it for nothing. Any of their money that is deſired for any public uſe, for the furtherance of the goſpel, it is all accounted loſt.

This

This contribution is here recommended to the Corinthians. They readily fell in with the propoſal, ver. 11. Now they are deſired to perform, each according to his ability.

In the text, an objection of the poorer ſort is anſwered, who might fear that any thing they had to give was ſo little, that it would not be accepted. In anſwer thereto, they are told that God regards mens works rather by the quality, than the quantity; by the mind it is given with, rather than by the thing given.

1. The caſe of acceptance is put, *If there be firſt a willing mind, it is accepted.* The acceptance here is of a man's work, not of his perſon; though the former always preſuppoſeth the latter, in the goſpel-way. And it refers to God, for he only can judge with what mind a thing is done. Now God accepts a man's ſervice, *if there be firſt a willing mind;* that is, a readineſs and good will to the work of his ſervice. If the heart go before, and lead the hand, it is accepted: otherwiſe it is not.

2. What regard is had in this acceptance of one's work, to the quantity of it. (1.) That it be according to one's ability, that it be done to his power. Some are able to do more, and be more uſeful than others: but if men have a willingneſs to the work, and do what they are able accordingly, it is accepted through Chriſt; his that can do but little, as well as his that can do much. But this cuts off the pretences of thoſe, who content themſelves with lazy wiſhes, and lay not out themſelves to do what they may do. (2.) That want of power to do more, ſhall not mar the acceptance of what is done according to power with a willing mind, Mark xii. 43. The Lord will take the little piece of ſervice off his people's hand, when the heart is right; as well as the great ſervice of thoſe of his that have great abilities. Not but that where the inability is brought on by people's own fault, it is their ſin that they do not do more; but that ſin ſhall be forgiven them, and

and what they do be accepted, *if there be firſt a willing mind.*

The ſcope and ſubſtance of the text may be taken up in the following doctrines.

Doct. I. *Works may be done in ſervice to God, that are not accepted of him.*

Doct. II. *It ſhould be our main concern in our works, that they may be accepted of God.*

Doct. III. *Where there is a willing mind carrying out a man to do and ſerve the Lord, to his ability, what is ſo done is accepted of God.*

Doct. IV. *Want of power to do more, ſhall not mar the acceptance of what is done from a willing mind according to one's power. In that caſe, God will accept of his people's will for the deed.*

I ſhall ſpeak to each of theſe doctrines in order.

Doct. I. *Works may be done in ſervice to God, that are not accepted of him.*

In treating this point, I ſhall,

I. Confirm the doctrine.

II. Aſſign the reaſons thereof.

III. Make ſome improvement.

I. In order to confirm the doctrine, conſider,

1. Oft-times God hides his face from the man and his work too, and people have no communion with God in their ſervices to him, Hoſ. v. 6. *They ſhall go with their flocks, and with their herds to ſeek the Lord: but they ſhall not find him, he hath withdrawn himſelf from them.* When a maſter will not look on his ſervant's work, it is an evidence he is not pleaſed with him, nor it, Iſ. i. 15. This may be the caſe of the godly ſometimes, and it is the caſe of the wicked always. O how many loſt ſervices are there this way!

2. Such ſervices may be ſo far from being accept-

ed,

ed, that they are really loathſome to a holy God, Prov. xv. 8. *The ſacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.* He reckons them to be to no purpoſe, he is full of them, they are vain in his eſteem, he cannot endure them, they are a trouble, a burden, and a wearineſs to him, If. i. 11.—14. So it is often fulfilled in this caſe, *That which is highly eſteemed amongſt men, is abomination in the ſight of God,* Luke xvi. 15. The man thinks highly of his own work, and others do ſo too: but in the mean time God abhors it.

3. God may put ſuch ſervices out of the roll of ſervices to him, and ſet them down in the roll of ſins againſt him. That is a terrible word, Jer. vii. 21. *Thus ſaith the Lord of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Put your burnt-offerings unto your ſacrifices, and eat fleſh: i. e.* Put your ſacrifices that ſhould be all burnt on the altar, to your other ſacrifices, and eat all together as common fleſh to fill your bellies: *q. d.* Let your prayers, and your common diſcourſe; your hearing of ſermons, and your idle tales, go together; I eſteem the one no more than the other. And that is another dreadful word, Amos iv. 4. *Come to Beth-el and tranſgreſs, at Gilgal multiply tranſgreſſion; and bring your ſacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years:* q. d. Go to your knees now, and take the name of God in vain; go to the church, and put off a little time of a Sabbath-day.

4. They may bring a curſe and a ſtroke on men, inſtead of a bleſſing and token of God's favour, Hoſ. viii. 13. *They ſacrifice fleſh for the ſacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the Lord accepteth them not: now will he remember their iniquity, and viſit their ſins.* Nadab and Abihu were conſumed by a fire that came out from the altar they were ſerving at; Ananias and Sapphira were ſtruck dead, on occaſion of ſelling their land, for the ſervice of the church; and men may be ſmothered with the dung of their ſacrifices ſpread on their faces, Mal. ii. 3.

5. *Laſtly,*

5. *Laſtly*, This may take place while the ſervice ſtands the man both coſt and pains. The Iſraelites were at coſt for ſpices for the altar, but all was rejected, Jer. vi. 20.; they were at pains in attending ordinances, and endured a ſtreſs in faſting, but all to no purpoſe, Iſ. lviii. 2. 3. Bodily exerciſe profiteth little before God, who is a Spirit, and muſt be worſhipped in ſpirit and in truth.

II. I am next to render the reaſons of the point, That works may be done in ſervice to God, that are not accepted of him. God is no auſtere maſter, but very indulgent to his ſervants, and will take a very ſmall ſervice kindly off their hands: but men often ſerve him in a way that is provoking to him, and to his diſhonour; and thence are the reaſons why their ſervices are not accepted.

1. Sometimes that is offered for ſervice to God, that is forbidden by him, John xvi. 2. *They ſhall put you out of the ſynagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you will think that he doth God ſervice.* A blinded conſcience gets the leading of a man, and leads him out of the way of God: it dictates what is ſin to be duty, and what is duty to be ſin; ſo that the man thinks he is ſerving God, while he is really ſerving his own corruptions; and ſo inſtead of a *Well done, good and faithful ſervant*, he meets with a *Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs*, Iſ. v. 20.; and *lies down* at length *in ſorrow*, Iſ. l. *ult.*

2. Sometimes that is offered that is not commanded or required, Matth. xv. 9. *In vain they do worſhip me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Nothing can be acceptable to God, but what is required by ſome one or other command of his; *for whatſoever is not of faith, is ſin*, Rom. xiv. *ult.* See Iſ. i. 12. Horrid idolatry is condemned on that very ground, that it was uncommanded ſervice, Jer.

vii. 31. It is an affront to the ſovereignty of God, and his maſterſhip, for men to order his ſervice according to the devices of their own hearts, and not to keep preciſely to his orders. Hence are the ſuperſtitions of Popery, and the uninſtituted ceremonies of the church of England, which are the product of human device, without any countenance from the word of God.

3. Oft-times, though the work be commanded of God, yet it is marred in the making. There is ſomething about the perſon, or the work, that ruins all.

1*ſt*, About the perſon, that mars the acceptance. As,

(1.) He may be in a ſtate of ſeparation from Chriſt, not united to him by faith, and ſo not accepted of God, John xv. 5. No acceptable work can be done by any man while he is out of Chriſt, Eph. ii. 10. For a man's perſon muſt be accepted, before his work can be accepted, ſince his work being imperfect, cannot procure the acceptance of his perſon. Now no ſinner's perſon is accepted but in Chriſt, Eph. i. 6. and we come to be in Chriſt by faith; therefore faith in Chriſt muſt go before acceptable obedience, Heb. xi. 6. Faith makes the tree good, ere it can bring forth good fruit, Matth. vii. 17. And no fruit obedience is accepted of God, but what grows on a branch of Chriſt the true vine. The blaſting curſe lies on all other. See Gen. vi. 9.

(2.) He may be in a ſtate of enmity with God: and as no man will like the ſervices of his enemies, ſo God will not accept the ſervices of one not reconciled to him, Amos iii. 3 *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* Every unbeliever is an enemy to God, Rom. viii. 7. for his ſin remains unpardoned, and his nature unchanged: and therefore his beſt works are but ſplendid ſins, himſelf but a whited ſepulchre; and when he ſpeaks and acts faireſt, there are ſeven abominations in his heart. How then can an all-ſeeing God accept ſuch ſervices?

(3.) He

(3.) He may be an unregenerate man, and ſo like Simon *in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity*, Acts viii. 23. Whoever are out of Chriſt, are unregenerate; for it is by being in him, and ſo partaking of his Spirit and fulneſs, that we become new creatures, 2 Cor. v. 17. Eph. i. 13. Now how can the corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? or the old nature acceptable obedience? If the fountain be poiſoned, can the ſtreams be wholeſome? Could one like the beſt liquor in a veſſel wherein there is no pleaſure?

(4.) He may be habitually unholy or profane in his life, or as to the body of his converſation, Prov. xxviii. 9. *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer ſhall be abomination.* So the Lord rejects the ſacrifices of the Iſraelites, Iſ. i. 15. 16. The Pſalmiſt tells us, that *the man who ſhall aſcend into the hill of the Lord, and ſtand in his holy place*, muſt *have clean hands, and a pure heart*, Pſal. xxiv. 3. 4. The apoſtle wills to *lift up holy hands, without wrath and doubting*, 1 Tim. ii. 8. if we would be accepted. Their converſation muſt be of a piece, whoſe works will be accepted: for God will never accept the ſervices of men, that for the moſt part ſerve the devil, the world, and their luſts. Many are like the harlot, Prov. vii. 13. 14. as if they thought their duties would purge away their ſins. Nay but their ſinful courſes otherwiſe will pollute and render abominable their duties, Hag. ii. 11.—14

2*dly*, About the work, that may mar its acceptance.

(1.) It may be none of the work of the Spirit of Chriſt in the man, but proceeding from a man's ſelf allenarly. All good works accepted of God are the product of the Holy Spirit in believers, as the ſap which the vine-ſtock communicates to the branches. Therefore to *the works of the fleſh*, Gal. v. 19. are oppoſed *the fruits of the Spirit*, ver. 22. And *all goodneſs is the fruit of the Spirit*, Eph. v. 9. and a

Chriſtian's life is a *walking after the Spirit*, Rom. viii. 1. as a borrowed life. And as no common hearth-fire could be accepted at the altar, but only the holy fire that came from heaven; ſo no work will be offered to the Father for acceptance by the Son, but what is the work of his own Spirit; and no work will be accepted by the Father, but what is offered by the Son as interceſſor. See Eph. ii. 18. See what prayer is accepted, Jam v. 16. Not the prayer of every one, but of a *righteous man:* not every prayer of a righteous man neither, but *the inwrought* (Gr.) *prayer* of his, *viz.* that which is inwrought by the Spirit.

(2.) It may be no work of love to God, or of a willing mind; but done awkwardly and againſt the grain, 1 Tim. i. 5.; ſome by-conſiderations moving the man to ſerve the Lord; and no liking of him or his ſervice. Forced ſervice can never be accepted, that which people are conſtrained to. It is the obedience of ſlaves, not of ſons, that natural men do perform; and flows from a ſpirit of fear, more than a ſpirit of love, 2 Tim. i. 7. See If. lxiv. 5.

(3.) It may be not done in faith, and ſo cannot be accepted, Heb. xi. 6. Acceptable ſervice is done in the faith of the command, having authority on the man's conſcience; and in the faith of the promiſe, the promiſe of ſtrength to perform, and the faith of the reward of grace, believing the labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. *ult.* But inſtead of that, moſt of our good works are done without any regard to God's authority, without any dependence on him for ſtrength, and without the true hope of the gratuitous reward of grace won by Chriſt to be communicated to us.

(4.) It may be done ſelfiſhly; men ſeeking their own profit in them, more than God's honour; ſeeking to pleaſe their own conſcience, that otherwiſe will not let them reſt, rather than to pleaſe God; ſeeking a name to themſelves, rather than to glorify his

his name; and to ſave their own ſouls from hell by them, rather than to teſtify their thankfulneſs to the Saviour, who has purchaſed ſalvation by his blood. This is to pervert the end of duties, to uſe them for unhallowed ends; in a word, to ſerve ourſelves, and not God: and therefore no more to be accepted than a ſervant's working his own inſtead of his maſter's work, Hoſ. ix. 4. Zech. vii. 6. Yea good things may be done downright to ſerve a luſt, or to ſatisfy a paſſion, Matth. xxiii. 14. 2 Sam. iii. 9.

(5.) It may be done *by chance* rather than of deſign, Lev. xxvi. 21. *Heb.* There are who are chance-cuſtomers to religion, who fall in with a good work, rather becauſe it falls in their way, than becauſe God lays it in their way: as the Danites, Judg. xviii. 5. God looks to the heart, and undeſigned ſervice to him will be reckoned no ſerving of him, but ſerving one's own fancy. This is another thing than one's embracing an opportunity which the Lord puts in his hand, Gal vi. 10. wherein one is glad of an occaſion of ſerving God.

(6.) It may be done by the power of a cuſtom, rather than of conſcience. Cuſtom, fallen into by education, or otherwiſe, is the ſpring of many duties done by men: wherein men move, by that, as a clock by the weights; rather than from an inward principle: which can never be acceptable to the heart-ſearching God, who requires reaſonable ſervice.

(7.) It may be done in a ſlighting manner, dealing ſcrimply and grudgingly with God. As when there is no proportion between the work and one's ability, as in the rich men caſting in their little piece of braſs-money, Mark xii. 41.; when men offer to God, not the beſt, but the moſt worthleſs they have: ſo did Cain, Gen. iv. 3. 4. Thus men by thinking any thing may ſerve in the ſervice of God, pour contempt on the holy One, and bring on themſelves a curſe inſtead of a bleſſing, Mal. i. 14.

(8.) *Laſtly*, When it is not offered to God for ac-

ceptance through Christ. It is God's appointment, Col. iii. 17. *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.* A young pigeon would have been accepted on the altar of Jerusalem, when a bullock would not have been accepted on the altar of Bethel. If the service of men be never so great and costly, if it is offered to God otherwise, and the acceptance of it looked for because of its own worth, it will be rejected, Rev. vii. 14. No works savour with God, but as they savour of Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 15.

I now proceed to make some short improvement of what has been said.

1. People may do much in the service of God, and yet do nothing to purpose, Eccl. x. 15. A man may go many a weary foot, and yet never come to the place he designed, while he wanders from the right way, 2 John 8. Such wanderers in religion are all unregenerate men, who set about duties: they are busy, doing nothing. They do many good things like Herod, and yet they never do one thing acceptably. For their persons are not accepted; and so their works cannot be so.

2. Even among the duties of a godly man, there may be much refuse; many unaccepted duties. A believer's person is always accepted of God, Eph. i. 6. for the state of justification is perpetual. But such may be the prevalence of faithlessness, selfishness, *&c.* in some particular works of his, that they may never come to be accepted of God; for sanctification has its ups and downs, being liable to many changes.

3. How little reason is there to boast of our works! There is nothing we can do, can be accepted for its own worth. If it be accepted, the meanness of it is seen, the soul is humbled, and no acceptance of it is looked for, but for the sake of Christ. If we be so conceited of our work, as to boast of it; it is an evidence that God accepts it not; hence said our Lord unto the Pharisees, Luke xvi. 15. *Ye are they which justify*

juſtify yourſelves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly eſteemed amongſt men, is abomination in the ſight of God.

4. What will come of them, that do nothing in the ſervice of God at all; but live in the habitual neglect of known duties, are prayerleſs, ſlighters of the means of grace, *&c.*? 1 Pet. iv. 18. If they that ſet off to the heavenly city may miſs the way, and never reach it; ſure thoſe that ſit ſtill, and never move that way, will never ſee it. Many ſooth themſelves in the neglect of duties, becauſe ſome that do them walk ſo unlike them: but the caſe of ſuch is very dangerous: for no habitual neglecters of duties can be ſaved; and it is in vain for men to make the practice of others an excuſe for evil doing.

5. *Laſtly*, Take heed how ye perform duties, and ſatisfy not yourſelves with the bare performance, without being ſolicitous as to the manner, Luke viii. 18. Better is one duty ſo managed, as to be accepted, than a hundred otherwiſe: as one piece of gold is more worth than a hundred counters. But this brings me to

Doct. II. *It ſhould be our main concern in our works, that they may be accepted of God.*

In handling this point, I ſhall,

I. Shew what is the acceptance of our works with God.

II. Give the reaſons of the doctrine.

III. Make improvement.

I. I ſhall ſhew what is the acceptance of our works with God. It lies in theſe two things.

1. His being pleaſed with them, Col. i. 10. *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing.* The accepted work God approves of, and is well pleaſed with. Though the ſaints do no works that they are every way pleaſed with themſelves; yet there

are

are some works of theirs that are very pleasing to God. He delights in them, Prov. xv. 8. They are sweet to him, as honey to the mouth, Cant. v. 1. They are sweet as music to the ear, and as beauty to the eye, Cant. ii. 14.

This presupposeth them to be good, and agreeable to his will. For evil cannot be pleasing to him, Psal. v. 4. He who is goodness itself, can never be pleased but with what is good, Heb xiii. 16. The unregenerate do nothing good, Psal. xiv. 2. 3. and so nothing they do is accepted, Heb. xi. 6. The saints do some things good, some things evil; the good is accepted, and the refuse is cast away.

2. His taking them off their hand, as service done to him. God testified his acceptance of the sacrifice by fire, Lev. ix. *ult.* for the fire made them go up in flames towards heaven, Judg. xiii. 20. See Psal. xx. 3. Gen. iv. 4. 5. So he received them off their hand. He reckons such a work a piece of service done to him, sets it down as it were in his book, in due time to give it a reward of grace, Lev. vii. 18. Mal. iii. 16.

Hence is the after-notice God takes of the good works of his people: In time, as it fared with Moses, who refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, was afterwards advanced to be king in Jeshurun. In eternity, as Matth. xxv. He will not forget any of them, Heb. vi. 10. but a plentiful sowing of them will have a plentiful reaping. So they are the surest riches, 1 Tim. vi. 18. Not that the reward is given for their sake, but for Christ's sake: and such is the covenant connection.

Quest. How can any of our works be accepted of a holy God, or he be well pleased with them, *&c.* since there is so much sinfulness attending the best of them?

Answ. 1. In point of justification they are not, nor cannot be accepted; *i. e.* our persons cannot be accepted as righteous for our works, since they are not legally perfect, perfect in every point. In the way of the

the covenant of works, the work was first to be accepted for its own sake, as absolutely perfect; and then the person for the work's sake. So that whosoever seek by their works to be accepted of God, they go back to the covenant of works; and must either bring works every way perfect, or be rejected: and because they cannot do such works, *therefore by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified*, Gal. ii 16.

2. In point of sanctification the good works of the justified may be accepted; *i. e.* one's person being accepted, his works may be accepted, being evangelically perfect, though not legally; being perfect in parts, though not in degrees. For in the way of the covenant of grace, the person is first accepted in Christ, and then his work though imperfect. Hence it appears,

(1.) That to a person's being accepted of God in Christ, there is no working, but believing required, Mark v. 36. For till the person be accepted of God in Christ, he can do no acceptable work. He can yield no savoury fruit till he be ingrafted by faith in Christ.

(2) That the way to bring sinners to good works, is to bring them to Christ in the first place by faith, that they may be justified and accepted in him. Men may be made proud legalists otherwise, but not evangelical Christians; whited sepulchres, but still full of rottenness.

(3.) That there is very good reason why the good works of unbelievers are rejected, because they are imperfect; and yet the good works of believers are accepted, though they be imperfect. For besides that the principle, motives, and ends of their works are vastly different, there is a great odds between,

[1.] Their states. The one is the King's friend, the other an enemy; the one the King's son, the other but his hired servant. If a man is pleased with a little piece of service that his own child does him, can the hired servant expect that as little will be taken

taken off his hand? Can our enemy expect the same acceptance of his service, as our friend?

[2.] The desired acceptance. The unbeliever desires his work may be accepted for his salvation; but the believer desires his work may be accepted as only a token of his gratitude to his Saviour, who has saved him already. Can any man rationally think, that as little can be accepted off his hand, for the price of salvation, as may be accepted for an acknowledgement of salvation received?

But further to clear this question, consider,

1. Even the acceptance in point of sanctification, is not for the sake of the work itself, nor for the worker's sake neither; but for Christ's sake, and by the means of his intercession. This is clear from the necessity of Christ's intercession to the acceptance of our works: and that intercession being a pleading of the merit of his own obedience and death, Col. iii. 17. Rev. vii. 14. and viii. 3. It is for the same merit of Christ, that first the believer himself, and then his imperfect works are accepted of God.

2. The sinfulness and imperfections that attend the works of the believer, are not, nor cannot be ever accepted. God is displeased and angry with the dross of sin that cleaves to the believer's best performances; and he never is so well pleased with the good in them, as to accept the ill too. Yea, he may write his indignation against these, when he is pleased with the substance of the work.

3. The main of the accepted work is good, however sinfulness attends it. For the matter of it, it is commanded; for the form of it, it proceeds from a right principle, the love of God; it is done in faith; and to the glory of God. And this is the work of God's own Spirit in the believer: the weaknesses that attend it, proceed from the believer himself. And such works as are good in the main, God will not reject, for the infirmities that attend them. As for

those

those works even of believers that are not thus good in the main, they are not at all accepted.

4. Christ separates the precious from the vile part, and offers the former perfumed with his merit unto the Father for acceptance, Heb. x. 21. 22. Rev. viii. 3. In every sacrifice, there were two very different things, the flesh, and the skin and dung. The former came to the altar, the latter never. So Christ separates in a believer's duties, that which is from his own Spirit, and that which is from the believer himself; puts away this, and presents that to his Father. This was lively represented in the burning of the incense, where the fire being set to it, the finer part went up in flame and smoke, towards heaven; and the gross part, the ashes, remained, and a priest came and carried them away in a golden dish. So is the case here: the finer part in the saints services, that which is done by the assistance of the Spirit and in faith, ascends to heaven for acceptance; and the ashes that remain, are carried away, in virtue of the free promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

5. *Lastly*, The Father then accepts the precious part for the Son's sake, and for the same sake pardons the guilt of the vile part, the infirmities attending it, Rev. viii. 4. Psal. cxli. 2. The accepted duties go through two hands, first the believer's, then Christ's; their prayers are first said on earth by themselves, then they are repeated in heaven by the Mediator. It is from the second hand only, and on the repetition only, that they are accepted, 1 Kings viii. 32.; and in the second hand, and on the repetition, they are not so bulky, but better.

II. I shall next give the reasons of the point, That it should be our main concern in our works, that they may be accepted of God. Because,

1. As God is the first cause, so he is the chief end of all things, Rom. xi. *ult. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.* So as we are his creatures,

creatures, our chief end in all our duties ſhould be to pleaſe him: as all the waters coming from the ſea, do return to it again. This was the duty of Adam in the covenant of works, as ſure as he was not to have another God, as in the firſt command; though he was to gain life by his works, which we are not, and therefore it is ſurely ours much more.

2. Our duties are a matter of gratitude; we owe them to God, not only in point of juſtice, but thankfulneſs, for benefits received, creation, preſervation, and redemption, Exod. xx. 2. *I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the houſe of bondage.* We are in debt to him; and we cannot pay, but only acknowledge by ſmall tokens, Hoſ. xiv. 2. If we are to offer to a fellow-creature, a token of our obligation to him, the firſt queſtion is, "What is it that I can give, that will be moſt acceptable to him?" How much more ſhould the firſt queſtion be, "What is it that I can give, that will be moſt acceptable to God?"

3. God looks mainly to the heart with which a duty is done, and knows whether he gets it or not, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Though a ſervant do well, yet if he hath no regard to his maſter's pleaſure in what he does, it is diſobliging: and whatever men do, if it is not their main aim to pleaſe God, it is provoking. Our aims may be hid from men; but they are as open to God as our ouvert actions.

4. *Laſtly*, It is a neceſſary ingredient in a good work, ſo that a work cannot be good without it, 1 Cor. x. 31. For ſuch a work is pointed wrong as to the end of it, Zech. vii. 5. It is a ſacrifice wanting the heart, the thing that God mainly requires and delights in, Prov. xxiii. 26. So whatever we may account it, God will not account it a good work.

I come now to the practical improvement of this doctrine; which I ſhall diſcuſs in a twofold uſe, *viz.* of conviction, and of exhortation.

USE I.

Use I. This doctrine may serve for conviction, humiliation, and reproof to men, who generally are strangers to it, and at best very defective in it. It may convict men,

1. In point of ill works. These are fruitful in the world, things that are altogether evil, and cannot be good, Gal. v. 19. In the midst of gospel-light they overflow, and there is no true repentance for them, because there is no reformation. To such workers I would say,

(1.) How far are ye from regarding at all God's acceptance of your works, who take the liberty to do against the letter of his law, what ye know his soul abhors? The drunkard, swearer, sabbath breaker, or unclean person, is not so abandoned, as to think, that these his actions can please God. But the truth is, the pleasing of God is what he is not anxious about, but he is resolved to please himself in his lust, let his Maker take it as he will. What must be the end of these things? Rom. i. 18. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*

(2.) Ye thereby evidence, that it is not the pleasing of God, but yourselves, that ye seek in your good works: and that therefore your ill works and your good works will all go one way, being rejected of God; your swearing and your praying, *&c.* will be reckoned all one. If it were your main design in one thing to please God, it would be so in all, Jam. ii. 10. 11.; and therefore since ye do not endeavour to please him in all, know that ye can please him in nothing, Psal. cxxv. *ult. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.*

2. In point of good works, namely, those that for the matter of them are good, wherein men may be accepted of God, if they rightly manage them. These are of three sorts.

1st, Natural good works, such as eating and drink-

ing, sleeping, *&c.* I call them good works, because they are commanded of God, are necessary to be done, and it would be sin to omit them. They are duties of the sixth command, the neglect whereof is sinful, Col. ii. *ult.* and one may be accepted of God in them, Rom. xiv. 3. or rejected of him, Zech. vii. 6. Bring these works of ours to this rule, That it should be our main concern in our works, that they may be accepted of God; and how may we stand convicted! of,

(1.) Regardlessness of God's approbation and acceptance in these things; having no eye to God in them, but going about them, as men without God in the world, or as beasts, Matth. xxiv. 38. without any regard to God's command requiring our use of them, dependence on God for the benefit of them, or design to be strengthened by them for serving of God in the duties of religion and our particular calling.

(2.) Dishonouring of God in them. In the way of purchasing them, many an ill shift is made for the belly; and if men can get it, to satisfy the appetite, they are not anxious about their right to it before God, whether it be with a good conscience their own bread, got with honest labour and industry, 2 Thess. iii. 12.; or whether doing their utmost with their industry, they have a right to it as charitable supply. In the way of using them, without conscientious moderation, by gluttony or drunkenness; a sinful eagerness to satisfy a lust for them; and unfitting themselves for the service of God by them.

It is but a little the time of eating and drinking will last: there is an eternity to be spent without them. If we endeavour to be accepted of God in them while they last, it will be our comfort when we shall for ever lay them aside; if not, the regardlessness and dishonouring of God in them, will be an eternal sting in the conscience.

2*dly*, Civil good works, which are the duties of mens station, in the common affairs of this life; such as

as the management of family-affairs, the duties of service, of a man's lawful trade or employment. These are good works on the matter, being commanded of God, and in which one is to walk with God, 1 Cor. vii. 24.; and therein one may be accepted, Eccl. ix. 7. or rejected, Prov. xxi. 4. Here again men may be convicted of,

(1.) Regardlessness of God's acceptance, Luke xvii. 28. These things mostly are managed without any eye to God, or to be accepted of him in them. His command and call by his providence unto them is not waited for; or if men have it, yet they do not regard it, to go about their business under a sense of God's command, Eph. vi 7. The Lord is not looked to for direction, but men trust themselves for conduct in these matters, Prov. iii. 5. 6. He is not depended on for success, but men are either flushed with presumptuous confidence, or tormenting anxiety, as to events, Psal. cxxvii. 1. And not God's word is the rule they act by in them, but their own worldly interest or ease.

(2.) Dishonouring God in them. As by pride, passion, and selfishness, which are to be found in people's managing of their family-affairs: if they get their business done, there is no concern how their families should serve the Lord. He is dishonoured by the unfaithfulness, dishonesty, eye-service, and perverseness of servants; and dishonoured by the lying, cheating, and injustice used by men in their dealings in their several employments.

These things are but time-things either: and all the hurry of worldly business will be hushed ere long; and death will draw the busiest man out of the throng, as clean as if he had never been in it, Eccl. ix. 6. It will be your interest to seek to be accepted of God in them; otherwise ye will lay up bitterness from them, that will be lasting when they are gone for ever.

3*dly*, Religious good works, the duties whether of the first or second table, which are duties of our

Christian calling, such as prayer, giving alms, *&c.* In them also men may here be convicted of,

(1.) Regardlessness of God's acceptance in them. Men proclaim this, by their rash approaching to them, without considering what they are to be about, Eccl. v. 1.; by their formality in them, satisfying themselves with the doing of the thing, without any anxiety to get their hearts up to the duty, to do it in a right manner; which is mere bodily exercise, 1 Tim. iv. 8.; and their carelessness after them, unconcernedness as to their success, when once the task is off their hand, Psal. v. 3.

(2.) Making other things our main concern in them: As, [1.] A name for religion, Matth vi. 2. An unholy heart, that is an enemy to religion at bottom, may be very fond of a name for it. And to advance this empty name, many times good gifts are prostituted, and enlargements in duty, and great performances for God: all of them running in that channel of ambition, to be highly esteemed of men as religious. [2.] Some worldly interest, John vi. 26. 27. So it was with Jehu. They will please men for their carnal interest, and do religious duties to please men. Often doth the fear of men go deeper here, than the fear of God; and the loss of some worldly interest, deeper than the loss of the soul. [3.] Peace in their own minds. There is a conscience within men, that will drive to duty, when there is no love to God drawing: so men by such duties rather seek to please themselves, than to please God. And, 1.) To keep conscience quiet, while it is quiet: so duties are made a bribe, to cause conscience hold its tongue. And certain it is, that many could not live so quietly in their sins as they do, were it not for their duties, as appears from the case of the adulterous whore, Prov. vii. 14. 15. This is the reason that publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before Pharisees; and Laodicea's case was the most hopeless of all the seven churches. 2.) To still

it

it again, when it is roused, Psal. lxxviii. 34. Men may be very anxious for comfort by duty, that have no concern for sanctification thereby. [4.] Salvation from hell and wrath, Matth. xix. 16.—20. One may follow duties on this account, without any love to God, as appears ver. 22. *But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.* Self is a strong motive, and heaven and hell are strong arguments for duty: but the misery is, they seek not God for himself, but for themselves, and so are rejected, 2 Tim i. 7.

In these duties we are now on our trials for heaven: in a little the sentence will be passed, according to our works. And those who are not now accepted of God in their duties, will then be rejected of God for ever.

Use II. Let it be your main concern in your works, that they may be accepted of God; whether they be natural, civil, or religious. For motives, consider,

1. This is a distinguishing character of one's state, whereby ye will prove yourselves either gracious or graceless. It is a native result of justification and acceptance of one's person with God, to be mainly concerned for God's acceptance of them in their work, 2 Cor. v. 9. So Noah's integrity and uprightness is traced to his justification as the source, Gen. vi. 9. For so the love of Christ constrains. Whereas the soul being in a state of enmity with God, natively issues in no concern to please him.

2. God is a great God and King, infinitely above the greatest on earth: he cannot be profited by our services, but requires us to labour to please him in them, Mal. i. 14. He gave us our being, and hath put each of us in our station, and carved out our work for us: whence it necessarily follows, that it should be our main concern to please him, 2 Tim. ii. 4. And would men more narrowly consider this, that it is God that has set them their business and sta-

tion, and consequently, that he will call for the account of our work; it would stir them up to make it their main care in their works, that they may be accepted of him.

3. There is a costly provision of an altar on which our sacrifices of praise may be accepted, Heb. xiii. 10. 15. There was nothing a sinner could have done, that could have been accepted, had there not been an altar to sanctify the gift. Now it is provided, a crucified Christ is that altar; he by his death has become a proper intercessor for acceptance, both of our persons, and our works. How hainous will our sin be, if we seek not to bring our gift to this altar, for acceptance with God?

4. Whatever good work, natural, civil, or religious, we do, may be accepted of God, as pleasing service to him through Christ, Heb. xiii. 15. 16. Men are hugely mistaken to think, that it is only works strictly called religious, that God accepts as service to him: nay whatever God calls for at thy hand, as to tend the sheep, as well as to attend his worship, if thou act in it to please him, and offer it to him for acceptance through Christ, it will be accepted, Col. iii. 23. 24. It is observable, that the apostle having given that general direction, ver. 17. *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, &c. falls immediately on relative duties, ver. 18. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands*, &c.

5. The example of Christ may be very moving here, Rom. xv. 3. *For even Christ pleased not himself.* His work was heavy work, but to please his Father he undertook it, set about it, and went through with it, John viii. 29. Psal. xl. & John iv. 34. And shall not we be concerned to please him in our imperfect works, to please whom Christ laid down his life?

6. If ye be mainly concerned for acceptance with God in your work, ye may expect help from the Lord in it. The waters and rivers run all to the sea, and so they are fed again by the sea, that they never run dry.

dry. That work that has God's pleasure for its end, will get God's hand to it for its help, Phil. ii. 12. 13. Prov. iii. 6. The man that slights God in his natural and civil actions, provokes God to leave him in them, Josh. ix. 14. and then his own understanding that he leaned to, proves folly. And he that slights God in his religious duties, does the same; and his gifts prove a broken reed.

7. Whatever be the success of your work, ye will have solid peace, satisfaction, and comfort, in your having been mainly concerned in your works for God's acceptance, Is. xlix. 4. Men are great fools, to promise themselves success on their own wise management of their natural and civil actions. It has been a truth from the beginning, and will be to the end of the world, that *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill*, Eccl ix. 11. And it is equally foolish to expect the world's thanks for doing them a good turn; for ye will be fair to be disappointed, 2 Tim. iii. 1. 2. and look blunt on the disappointment. Nay, such an ill-natured world it is, that it is one to a thousand if they be not heavy on you for it. For, says Solomon, Eccl. iv. 4. *I considered all travel, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour.* But when this is one's main concern, he has what he looked for, 2 Cor. i. 12. *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-wards.*

8. If ye do not thus, your works will be lost; lost with God, and lost for eternity; and if that be, all that ye will find of them in the world, will be little worth, Matth. vi. 2. This is our sowing time, good works are the seed: will it not be sad to lose all, so as in the harvest ye have nothing to reap? So it will be,

be, if in this your ſowing time ye do not throw in the ſeeds of good works, and make it your principal concern to look for acceptance with God in them; all ye do will be loſt for ever, ye will have nothing to reap in the harveſt at the laſt day.

9. *Laſtly*, If ye do not, your beſt works will be turned to ſin, Prov. xv. 8. and ye will be ſurpriſed to find ſo many actions of yours that ye ſet down in the roll of good works, appear in God's book in the roll of ſins; as cockle inſtead of barley. There is ſuch a thing, Pſal. cix. 7. *Let his prayer become ſin.*

For direction in this point, we proceed to

DOCT. III. *Where there is a willing mind carrying out a man to do and ſerve the Lord, to his ability, what is ſo done is accepted of God.*

Here I ſhall ſhew,

I. What ſort of works they are that are accepted of God.

II. How or in what reſpect they are accepted.

III. Why they are ſo.

IV. *Laſtly*, Apply.

I. I am to ſhew what ſort of works they are that are accepted of God.

FIRST, They are works done with a willing mind. Wherein we are to conſider,

1. What this willingneſs relates to.

2. What it is.

Firſt, Let us conſider what this willingneſs relates to. This willingneſs of the ſoul reſpects the will of God, as that which the ſoul is willing to comply with. The will of God is contained in his commands, ſummed up in a word, 1 Theſſ. iv. 3. *This is the will of God, even your ſanctification;* and it is the duty of all of us to be willing to that will of God, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. and to ſay as Pſal. xl. 8. *I delight to do thy will, O my God.* Hence,

1. A

1. A work accepted of God is a commanded work, required of us by God himself, and not an unrequired work, Rev. xxii. 14. *Blessed are they that do his commandments.* Matth. xv. 9. *In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Therefore,

(1.) Nothing in itself sinful can ever be accepted of God; though people may pretend they have no ill in their mind against God in doing it; yea though they may have a good intention in it to serve God by it, John xvi. 2. Yet how many do, on these pretences, lie without any check, and do other ill things? Prov. xxvi. 18. 19. *As a mad-man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death: so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?*

(2.) Nothing, that is not required of God, though it be not in itself sinful, can be accepted of him, Matth. xv. 9. For there can be no obedience, where there is not a command; these are relatives. If God command us not, we cannot be said to obey him, nor be accepted of him. Hence, [1.] Will-worship is false worship, and service to God just of mens own devising is not, nor can be accepted, Col. ii. 21. 22. 23. *Devised of one's own heart*, is a brand of rejection fixed on a work, that is not in itself evil, 1 Kings xii. *ult.* And Saul lost the kingdom on such a work, 1 Sam. xv. 21. [2.] Doing a duty not the duty of one's station cannot be accepted, 1 Cor. vii. 24. It was a duty to sacrifice, and to burn incense; yet Saul provoked the Lord by his doing the one, and Uzziah was smitten with leprosy for doing the other: because though they were duties, yet they belonged not to their stations. In a well-ordered family, one servant must not take his neighbour's work and post.

2. The command of God requiring the work must be known to the doer; for otherwise men serve the Lord but at a venture, not knowing whether it be his will or no, which can never be accepted, Lev. xxvi. 21.

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The acceptable work must be done in faith, faith of the command of God, implying knowledge of it, Rom. xiv. *ult.*

The sum of the whole lies here. If ye would have your work accepted of God, ye must (1.) Know it to be a commanded duty. (2.) Commanded to you. The want of either will mar the acceptance, as a duty not proceeding from a willing mind.

Secondly, Let us consider what this willingness of mind is. It is twofold, habitual and actual.

1. Habitual; which is a disposition of the soul to comply with the will of God's commands, arising from the new nature given in regeneration or the saving change, Heb. viii. 10 *I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.* Psal. cx 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning.* The carnal unrenewed mind is enmity against God and his law, Rom. viii. 7. And while that corrupt set abides on the heart predominant, as in all natural men, there can be no true willingness to comply with the will of God. Hence, that any work of ours may be accepted of God, we must be,

(1) United to Christ by faith, John xv. 5. While we continue in our natural state, growing on the old stock of the first Adam, we can bring forth no fruit acceptable to God: for the whole nature is corrupt according to the stock, and so must the fruit be, Rom. vii. 5. Particularly there is a reigning refractoriness in the will, whereby the soul is as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke of God's will. Whereas the soul being in Christ is changed, according to the nature of the new stock, and made willing, 2 Cor. v. 17. and gets his image, opposed to Adam's, 1 Cor. xv. 49.

(2.) We must be regenerated, and have our nature changed. The tree must be made good, before the fruit can be so, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 27. How can there be a willing mind for duty, while the will is unrenewed?

ed? How can there be new obedience, while one is not partaker of the new nature? The dark mind, the perverse will, and disorderly affections, not rectified by regenerating grace, being all of them opposite to good, shew the want of a willing mind.

(3.) We must have a predominant love to God, 1 Tim. i 5. This disposeth the soul, by a constraining force, to fall in with whatsoever the Lord requires; and constitutes one's obedience labour of love. And where it is wanting, good things may indeed be done, for some by-ends, and from some by-principles: but there is not first a willing mind.

This is the habitual willing mind, whereby the soul being in Christ, regenerated, and having the love of God dwelling in it, is in such a disposition to fall in with the will of God, that getting a touch of a particular command, it readily complies therewith in obedience.

2. Actual; which is an actual compliance of the heart, with such and such a particular duty, laid before one at such a time and in such a place; and ariseth from the habitual disposition. The one looks to the whole law; the other to particular commands requiring such and such a particular duty, as of the Corinthians to help the poor saints of Judea. And it implies,

(1.) An approbation of the command of God for the duty. What the Lord by his word and providence requires of the man as duty, he has a love and liking of it from the heart, Rom. vii. 12. The carnal heart rises against this and the other command laying such a duty on the man; and he takes it on as a slave does his burden, because he cannot help it. But the willing mind has a liking of it, 1 John v. 3. as the little child has a liking of being bid do any little piece of service for his father.

(2.) A sincere resolution to set to the work in the season thereof, Josh. xxiv. 15. Psal. cxix. 106. The willing mind goes not about to seek how to shift obedience

dience to the divine call; nor does it seek offputs and delays, till the season of the duty is away; nor does it muster up difficulties, saying, *There is a lion in the way*, to palliate disobedience; but resolves to put to hand timely, Psal. cxix. 60. *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*

(3.) A compliance of the heart with the command to the duty, because it is God's command, Psal. cxix. 4. The authority of God has weight with the man's conscience; and the love of God inclines his heart to obey. So the will of God is the reason, as well as the rule, of his obedience. As he believes the promise, because God has said it; so he obeys the command, because God has bid it. So the man's great aim is to answer the call of God, and please him.

(4.) A delight and chearfulness in the duty, Is. lxiv 5. 2 Cor. ix. 7. Love to the Lord oils the wheels of the soul, and the work goes on, not as of necessity, but as of choice, 1 John v. 3. The awfulness of the command is vailed with prevailing love: take off the threatening of wrath from the command, and the willing soul would not stop for all that; for the love of God in the heart is a law, and a powerful one too, Cant. viii. 6. Terror drives to duty, but weakens; love draws to duty, and strengthens, 2 Tim. i. 7. Terror will make men find their hands, but they lose heart; but loves gives heart and hand too.

(5.) A design to honour God by the duty. The general direction is plain, 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God:* and thereto the willing mind echoes back, *To me to live is Christ*, Phil. i. 21. The willing mind is not obtained but by faith, whereby the conscience is made good, and the soul put in a state of salvation: hence natively follows the design of glorifying God by good works, and by them adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour, 1 Pet. ii. 9. The faith of Christ's salvation makes a powerful impression of gratitude

gratitude on the soul, that it is glad of an occasion to glorify him, and expresses its love, Psal. cxvi. 12. *What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me?*

(6.) *Lastly*, A looking out for promised help to the duty, by faith, Heb. xii. 1. 2. The willing mind is not blind to its own weakness, but sees that better than others. But what one is really willing and hearty for the doing of, he will use all means for reaching his end. Carnal men say, they are willing, but they cannot: in that they deceive themselves; for if they were really willing, they would go to the fountain of strength for help. So do they with whom is first a willing mind, they set about the duty in the faith of the promise. Hence they will go forward on God's call, however difficult the work be, and get through too; as the women came to the sepulchre, though not knowing how the stone would be rolled away.

Secondly, They are works, that from a willing mind are done to their ability. We may take up this in these four things.

1. They are works, which, people having ability for, are done: they are not merely wished and woulded to be done, as the sluggard uses to wish well with folded hands, Prov. xxi. 25. For where the heart is to a work, the hand will be put to it, so far as in them lies. Men do but deceive themselves, who please themselves with good desires and wishes, without endeavours backing them, Matth. vii. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* Jam. i. 22. *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

2. They are done according to the ability they could get in. That is, not only according to the ability in hand, but the man labours to get more ability for the work, whereby he may be fitted for it.

We are naturally impotent for any good work; but there is a ſtorehouſe of ſtrength opened to us in Chriſt, to be brought in by faith, Iſ. xlv. 24. Wherefore they that are not concerned to fetch in ſtrength for duty; but are unable for duty, and hold themſelves ſo, will not be accepted: for there is no willing mind there.

3. They are not done quite below what they might have done, and was in the power of their hand, Iſ. xxxii. 5. Where there is an utter diſproportion betwixt one's ability and ſervice, it cannot be accepted, but that ſervice brings a curſe inſtead of a bleſſing, Prov. xi. 24. Hence a certain quantity of ſervice may be accepted off one's hand, that will not be accepted off another's, Luke xii. 48. Where God gives much, he requires the greater returns.

4. *Laſtly*, They are works wherein the willingneſs of the mind carries out the hand to do, as far as it can reach, 2 Cor. viii. 3. The willing mind loves to ſerve the Lord, and to ſerve him liberally; and ſo carries a man to do to his power.

II. The next general head is to ſhew, how or in what reſpect ſuch a work is accepted. God accepts ſuch works,

1. As obedience to him, and a doing of his will, Matth. xxv. 21. As the willing mind is peculiar to thoſe within the covenant of grace, ſo it is the privilege of thoſe in that covenant, to have their works ſo done accepted, though imperfect. There is not one piece of obedience they can do, that is perfect, or could be ſuſtained as obedience according to the covenant of works: but God in Chriſt, in virtue of the covenant of grace, accepts ſuch imperfect works as obedience pleaſing to him, Acts xiii. 22.

2. As a token of their love to God, Heb. vi. 10. A love token is accepted, though not great, if according to the ability of the giver: eſpecially with God, who looks more to the heart it is given with, than

than the gift. Some offered gold and precious ſtones for the ſervice of the tabernacle; ſome but goats hair and ram-ſkins: the latter as well as the former was accepted, where they gave according to their ability with willingneſs.

3. So as to be rewarded, 1 Cor. xv. *ult.* As believers good works are tokens of their love to God, ſo God gives them tokens of his good pleaſure with their works, not of debt, but of grace. To thoſe that improve the abilities they have, he oft-times gives more ability, *To him that hath ſhall be given.* However, accepted good works are a ſeed, that will never miſs a rich harveſt, ſooner or later.

III. I proceed to ſhew why ſuch works are accepted. It is not for their own worth; for the beſt works of the ſaints are attended with ſuch ſinfulneſs, that they could not be accepted in the eye of the law; but have in them more than ſufficient matter of condemnation, If. lxiv. 6. But they are accepted through ſpecial privilege.

1. Being ſanctified through the Spirit, Rom. xv. 16. Every work of ours is defiled by us, being in ourſelves unclean creatures: but the Spirit works in believers, ſanctifying them and their works. And he ſanctifies their works, by influencing them to work and in their work; exciting them, giving gracious abilities: particularly working in them that approbation and liking of the command, that reſolution to ſet about the work, that compliance of the heart with it, that delight and chearfulneſs in the duty, that deſign to honour God by it, and that looking out for promiſed help, which I have ſpoke of before, and cauſing them to offer their works to God through Chriſt.

2. They are preſented for acceptance, by the Mediator, to the Father. Chriſt is the believer's reſident in the court of heaven, managing all their matters there by his interceſſion, Heb. vii. 25. He takes

their imperfect works, perfumes them with the merit of his obedience and death, and gains their acceptance with the Father, according to the covenant of grace, Rev. viii. 3. 4. The sum of the matter lies here; they are the work of his own Spirit in his children, presented for acceptance by the Son, and so they are accepted of the Father, Eph. ii. 18.

USE. From what is said, we may draw the two following inferences.

1. See here of what concern it is to get the heart up to every duty, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. The doing of the bare work is of small account with God; and where there is not a heart to it, God regards it not. A good work done grudgingly, whatever use it may be for among men, is an ill work in God's sight.

Quest. How may one get up his heart to every duty?

Answ. (1.) Accept of Christ's free salvation by faith, that ye may be brought into a state of salvation. We have a spirit of slaves, a backwardness to good, derived from Adam. It is from Christ we must get the spirit of sons, and the willing mind, uniting with him by faith, John i. 16. Faith trusting on Christ for salvation to be received freely, works that willingness of mind.

(2.) Exercise faith for every duty anew. Believe the promise, [1.] Of assistance by the Spirit, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 27. In the covenant of grace commands are turned to promises, as Deut. x. 16. *Circumcise the foreskin of your heart.* Compare Deut. xxx. 6. *The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart.* Every call to duty implies a promise of assistance. The belief of this makes willing, Phil. ii. 12. 13. [2.] Of acceptance through Christ. The apostles work was heavy, but that made them willing, 2 Cor. ii. 15. *For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.* It is hard to

to be willing to a work, which one does not believe will be accepted.

2 See of what concern it is to put hand to every duty commanded us, and to do in it according to one's power; and not to content ourselves with lazy wishes as some do, and slack and scrimp performances as others, Eccl. ix. 10. Neither will to wish and do nothing be accepted; nor, to do but do niggardly. It is not in every case that God will accept the will for the deed.

1st, God will not accept the natural or unregenerate man's will for the deed, in any case. For such a one is under the covenant of works, and no less than works every way perfect can be accepted off his hand, Gal. iii 10. But this is a privilege of the covenant of grace, which they are not under, not being in Christ. It is the privilege of sons, but they are but at best hired servants, working for hire, nay slaves, as under the curse Their persons are not accepted; therefore nothing they are, have, or can do, can be accepted. Therefore deceive not yourselves, looking for this benefit, while ye are out of Christ.

2*dly*, God will accept no man's will for the deed,

(1.) When they content themselves with wishing only they could do a duty commanded them, but yet never essay it, nor put hand to it, Prov. xxi. 25. The sluggard unwilling to obey, makes a cover for his sloth, of the difficulty and his inability for duty, Prov. xxii. 13. But God will rent off that cover, and shew them in their own colours, Matth. xxv. 24.—30. Men cannot deny but that such a thing is their duty; and they wish they could; but that is all.

(2.) When they do not what is really in their power to do, Rom. i. 20. 21. Mens power is indeed little, but their doing is far less. Men are not as stocks and stones, but there are many things acts of moral discipline, that they may and can do, but they will not. But they grasp at the principle, that they can do nothing, and so fold their hands sitting down con-

tented. They cannot do all, therefore they will do nothing. But will that be accepted? No, Exod. xiv. 15. The women did not so, Mark xvi. 2. 4.

(3.) *Lastly*, When they do not by faith fetch in grace from the Lord Jesus to strengthen them to duty, 2 Tim. ii. 1. compared with John v. 40 Many a good work is laid by, because of inability, and marred because we can carry it no further: but God will take notice what course is taken for getting in strength for duty. There are full promises lying between us and the full fountain, as the conduit-pipes at which faith is to suck and draw, Is. xl. 29. 30. 31. Assure yourselves, that the will will not be accepted for the deed, while this is neglected. And why should it? Is that man willing to pay his debt, who though he has nothing in hand, yet has a gift lying in a rich friend's hand, but he will not lift it? See the decision, Matth. xxv. 27. *Thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.*

I shall now consider in a few words the last doctrine I offered from the text, *viz.*

Doct. IV. *Want of power to do more, shall not mar the acceptance of what is done from a willing mind according to power. In that case, God will accept of his people's will for the deed.*

Here I shall shew,

I. In what particular cases God accepts his people's will for the deed.

II. Why he does so.

III. Apply.

I. I am to shew in what particular cases God accepts his people's will for the deed.

1. Where there is a sincere will to serve him in a piece of work, requiring some external abilities, which are wanting. If it be hindered only by such want, the

the will is accepted. The disciples would fain have watched more, but the weak body could not bear up with their mind; and Christ kindly takes notice of it, Matth. xxvi 41. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Sometimes Satan makes a rack here to God's children: such a duty they would do, but bodily strength will not answer, and hereupon they are disquieted: but that is from Satan, and their own weakness: for God does not require that external duty from us, that we have no bodily strength for. That is a sweet word, 1 Cor. vi. 13. *The body is—for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.* Peter would fain have given to the poor man, but had it not, and it was accepted in the will. Acts iii 6.

2. When doing the best we can through grace, our work after all is attended with many blemishes: the Lord will not reject it for these blemishes, but accepts the will to do better for the deed, Cant. v. 1. There is a broad cover of Christ's righteousness cast over the believer's spots, that they appear not, Cant. iv. 7.; and the Lord accepts of the will to that perfection they would be at.

3. Going as far as we have access in a work, but meeting with a providential stop, the will to complete it is accepted for the deed, as if it had been fully done, as in the case of Abraham's offering up Isaac, Heb. xi. 17. There is a great difference betwixt the stops men make in these, and those which God makes: the former argues an unwilling mind, but the latter not so.

4. Services that one really desires, and fain would perform for God, but have not opportunity; the will to them is accepted for the deed, as in the case of David's purposing to build a house for the Lord, 2 Chron. vi. 8. and the Philippians care about supplying Paul's wants, Phil. iv. 10. Some have opportunities of usefulness, but slight them; that is their sin: others may have a heart to be so and so useful,

uſeful, but they cannot have the opportunity; this God accepts.

5 *Laſtly*, In ſervices performed with a real deſire of ſucceſs for God's honour and mens good; the Lord accepts the good will to the ſucceſs denied, as if it had ſucceeded according to their wiſh, If xlix. 4. 2 Cor. ii. 15. The want of ſucceſs may mar their preſent comfort, but neither the acceptance nor reward.

II. Why does God accept ſuch will for the deed?

1. The ſincere will to a work is preſent, which God mainly regards. The perſon ſincerely aims at doing ſuch a piece of ſervice for God, but not attaining what he really deſires, his good will thereto being preſent before the Lord, it is accepted, as if the work had been done.

2. We have a merciful High Prieſt to preſent that will for acceptance, notwithſtanding all the weakneſſes, blemiſhes, providential hindrances, want of opportunity, and failure of ſucceſs, that it may be attended with, Heb iv. 15. 16.

3. We have a merciful Father to deal with, Pſal. ciii. 13. 14. who pities the weakneſſes and infirmities of his people, and graciouſly accepts of their upright deſigns to ſerve and honour him.

Use. 1. If the Lord accepts the will for the deed in his own people, then men muſt anſwer for the ill they had a will to have done, as if they had done it, Numb xiv. 42. 44. 45. A will and intention to do an evil action, though it be not actually done, is in God's account the ſame thing with doing it, and will be reſented and puniſhed accordingly.

2. God is a gracious maſter to his ſervants, taking kindly off their hands through Chriſt their ſincere will to his ſervice, giving them ample teſtimonies of his regard in all circumſtances, and beſtowing upon them the ſpecial comforts of his grace here, as pledges of the full reward laid up for them in glory hereafter.

Jeſus

Jesus Christ the beloved One, and Sinners accepted of God, freely in him.

The substance of some Sermons preached at Etterick in the year 1726.

EPHESIANS i. 6.

—His grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

BEfore our works can be accepted, our persons must; and how that is attained, is here declared.

The apostle taking a view of the state of salvation that believers are brought into, in the fulness of it, ver. 3. runs it up unto the prime author of it, the Father, *ib.* the eternal plan of it in the decree of election, ver. 4. whereof the great design to be accomplished on them, their true sanctification, *ib.* to be begun here, and perfected in glory; the reason of this design, that they were predestinated to adoption into his family, for it was inconsistent with the honour of a holy God, to have unholy children, ver. 5. In this verse are two things.

1. The great end of God's predestinating the elect to be his own children; *the praise of the glory of his grace.* It was a display of his free grace that he aimed at. Grace is love and favour freely flowing, without any thing in the object to draw it out. This grace shown to sinners is glorious grace, like a shining sun, casting such a lustre, as is most admirable and attractive. And it is to be praised by the sons of men: but they that do not see, and do not feel the glory of it, cannot praise it, more than the blind the light of the sun. But God purposed to bring the elect out of the devil's family, and make them his own children

children freely: that they seeing, tasting, and feeling this glorious grace, might raise a song of praise of it here, and joining voices in heaven, might carry it on in the highest strain there for ever, praising the glorious grace appearing in their adoption; opening the various folds of it, and admiring the glories of free grace, for ever and ever. It is dangerous then to cast a veil over it, doctrinally or practically.

2. A particular fruit of this glorious grace; *Wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.* Where we have,

(1.) The fruit itself, the acceptance of the persons of believers with God: *He hath made us accepted.* The acceptor is the *Father*, ver. 3. 5. The accepted are *us*, believers, who are *blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*, ver. 3. The acceptance is emphatically expressed. The word is, as if he had said, *he hath graced us*; and imports not only that he hath accepted us, but freely accepted us, without any thing in us to render us acceptable; and bears not only free love and favour, but also all kinds of real benefits and favours flowing therefrom, Luke i. 28.

(2.) The way and manner of the acceptance. How can a sinner be accepted of a holy God? *In the Beloved*, that is, Christ. It is not only for his sake, but God looking on the sinner in Christ, united to him, accepts him. He calls Christ here *the Beloved*, to intimate that the accepting love and favour of God is first pitched on him, and then for his sake comes down on his members: so he is the Beloved by way of eminency He saith not, *his Beloved*, though doubtless he mainly aims at that, but *the Beloved*, that he might give a vent to that love to Christ that his heart swelled with on the mention of this; and so uses a general term, whereby Christ might be pointed out as the object whereon the loves of heaven and earth meet together.

(3.) The original spring and source of this acceptance, intimated by the relative *wherein*. It refers not only to the word *grace*, but to *the glory of his grace*,

q. d.

q. d. *From*, *through*, and *by* which glorious grace and free favour, he hath freely accepted us undeserving and ill-deserving creatures; that glorious grace finding a way to accept the sinner, with the good leave of justice, in Christ.

From the text, thus explained, ariseth the following savoury points of doctrine.

DOCT. I. *Jesus Christ is the beloved, the eminently-beloved One.*

DOCT. II. *The way how a sinner comes to be accepted of God, is freely, in Christ.*

DOCT. III. *Glorious free grace shines forth in the acceptance of sinners in the beloved Jesus.*

DOCT. I. *Jesus Christ is the beloved, the eminently-beloved One.*

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew in what respects Christ is the beloved One, eminently.

II. Make some improvement.

I. I am to shew in what respects Christ is the beloved One, eminently.

First, He is the beloved of the excellent ones of the earth. Who these are, ye may see Psal. xvi. 3. They are *the saints*. Him all the saints love with a love above all persons and all things, Luke xiv. 26. And,

1. They meet all together in him in love, however they are scattered through the world; hence is he called, *the desire of all nations*, Hag. ii. 7. So that lovers of Christ and saints are of equal latitude, Eph. vi. 24. *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.* The American saints and the European saints take him all for their Beloved. As it is the same sun in the firmament that warms all their bodies, it is the same Sun of righteousness, Christ, that warms all their hearts in love. They differ vastly in their

their languages, customs, and particular dispositions: but they perfectly agree in their love of one beloved Jesus, Gen. xlix. 10 —*Unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* And so they are knit as one body, whereof Christ is the beloved head.

2. Each one of them loves him with a superlative and transcendent love, Psal lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* They have a general love to mankind, a special love to their respective countries, a more special love to their relations, but the most special and peculiar love, leaving all the rest behind, is to Christ, Luke xiv. 26. In the other they are divided, but in this they meet in one: their beloved ones are very different, but their beloved One is one and the same.

3. They love other persons and things for his sake, Rom. xv. 2. 3. Tit. iii. 3. 4. 5. When the soul is in its natural state, other persons and things have the man's love, but Christ has none of it: when Christ discovers himself in his glory to the soul, then the man hates all in comparison of him: but Christ regulates the soul's love to other things, and takes it not away, but makes it run in another channel, springing from himself. Now other things being loved for him, himself is the best beloved.

4. The liker any thing is to him, they love it the more. Hence the godly that bear his image, are therefore beloved by them; and the more godly they are, the more beloved are they, 1 John iii. 14. They love his ordinances, because they bear the impress of his authority, his law as the image of his nature; his way and example, because of the tread of his steps therein to be seen. All which bear him to be their eminently beloved. And,

1*st*, They love him with a love of good-will; and vent it in prayer and praise, Psal. lxxii. 15.—*Prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised.* It is not in their power to profit him, and

and he needs nothing at the creature's hand, being completely happy in his Father: but they shew goodwill to him, in concern for his glory in the world, that his kingdom may prosper, his name spread far and wide, and be perpetuated to all generations.

2*dly*, They love him with a love of delight and complacency, 1 Pet. ii. 7. *Unto you which believe he is precious.* His name and every letter of it is sweet to them, Cant. i. 3. They delight in him as a sister in a brother, a child in a father, and a spouse in a husband. Every thing in Christ is sweet to a believer: therefore they are said to eat his flesh, and drink his blood: for as by eating one finds the sweetness of the meat, and every bit of it, so by faith the soul finds the sweetness of Christ, and every thing in Christ. And,

(1.) They love him for what he is in himself, Cant. v. 10.—16. The glorious excellencies of his person and natures, his attributes and perfections, make him the object of their love. Their hearts are framed to the love of God: so they love him for himself, they love him for that holiness and purity for which carnal men hate him, as the owl doth the sun, Psal. xxx. 4.

(2.) They love him for what he is to them, Cant. v. 16. And as he is best in himself, he is the best to them. They love him for all his offices; for what he has done for them, and for what he will do for them. They love him as the foundation of all their hopes, the scope of all their desires, and the spring of all their joys. And fitly does he go under the name *the Beloved*, even in respect of the saints: for,

[1.] They profess him to be the beloved of their souls: they are not ashamed of their choice. So the spouse calls him, Cant. *per tot.* See chap. iii. 3. *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?* as if she would have all to know him by that name, *her Beloved*; supposing there is none so but he.

[2.] They shew him to be so, by their life and

actions before the world, Cant. viii. 6. 7. Where love to Christ is, it will discover itself, by the soul's preferring Christ to all persons and things, so as to part with any thing, when it comes in competition with him.

Secondly, Christ is the beloved of the glorious ones in heaven. All eyes are upon him there, for he is there the light of the pleasant land, Rev. xxi. 23. as the sun is in this world. And he is there,

1. The beloved of the glorified saints, who now love him in perfection, Rev. vii. 10. Their love to him is now perfected, and they love him with a pure and ardent love. They see him now no more through a glass, but face to face; they behold the glories of his person; the glories of his actings and sufferings for them; his eternal undertaking, his going through with his undertaking in his birth, life, and death; and the glory he now hath from his Father as the reward. So their love to him is in a continual flame.

2. The beloved of the holy angels, Rev. v. 11. 12. In the temple the cherubims were posted, looking towards the ark or mercy-seat, a type of Christ; which signified the angels looking to Jesus with love and admiration, 1 Pet. i. 12. They behold his glory, and cannot but love him. They love him as the brightness of the Father's glory; as the elder Brother of the family, the heir of all things, and their Lord, Heb. i. 6. as the Saviour of sinners, and the head of angels, by whom they and all things do consist, Eph. i. 10.

3. The Father's beloved, Matth. xvii. 5. And here we may consider Christ two ways, as God, and as Mediator.

1st, As God, equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit. He was the beloved of the Father and the Spirit. The scripture teacheth that *God is love*, 1 John iv. 8. and that love must be eminently among the persons of the glorious Trinity one towards another. Thus Prov. viii. 30. he is held out as the Creator's

Creator's delight. See John i. 18. Heb. i. 2. But what our text mainly aims at, is,

2*dly*, As Mediator, God-man, having a common relation to God and sinners of mankind, as the representative of an elect world, and the bond of union and communion betwixt God and sinners, for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners.

(1.) As such he is the Father's beloved, his prime favourite, and most accepted, his *well Beloved*, Mark xii. 6. in whom he is *well pleased*, Matth. iii. *ult.* the perpetual rest of his eyes and heart, 2 Chron. vii. 16. And he is his beloved,

[1.] In respect of his person, John i. 18. He *is in the bosom of the Father*. For he is *the brightness of his Father's glory*, Heb. i. 2. The glory of God shines forth in his face, 2 Cor. iv. 6. He is *the image of God* in a peculiar manner, ver. 4. Therefore says he, John xiv. 9. *He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father*. See Col. ii. 9. & i. 19. So he is the most beautiful object in the eyes of God, in heaven or in earth; and accordingly has the highest place in his love, Heb. i. 13.

[2.] In respect of his office. The Father is well pleased with him in the character he took on. And,

1.) He was well pleased with his undertaking for the great work of sinners salvation. See with what satisfaction he speaks of it, Psal. lxxxix. 19. *I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one chosen out of the people.* He cordially accepted him as the sinners surety, and took his single bond for all the elects debt, and his security for the injured honour of his name. He was the Father's own choice, and he delighted in his choice, Is. xlii. 1. He so loved the Undertaker, that,

1.] He promised to be with him, and furnished him with all things necessary for the work, Is. xlii. 6. & lxi. 1.

2.] He bestowed eternal salvation on many, before the time the Saviour paid the ransom: he set

them free, and gave them their diſcharge, before the death of Chriſt. He reſted in the Beloved's engagement.

2.) He was well pleaſed with and accepted him in his carrying on of the work that he had undertaken.—With his birth, therefore the angels were employed to carry the tidings of it, and ſung ſolemnly on that occaſion.—With his entering on his public work at his baptiſm, teſtified by a voice from heaven, Matth. iii. *ult.* and all along, teſtified by his being always with him, John viii. 29.

3.) He was well pleaſed with his perfecting of the work, by his death and burial. He did in it the moſt acceptable piece of ſervice to God, that ever was done, John x. 17. His ſacrifice of himſelf was of a ſweet ſavour unto God. He ſo loved him for it, that he raiſed him up, and ſet him on his right hand for ever for it, Phil. ii. 8. 9. and accepts the worſt of ſinners in him, for his ſake.

(2.) As ſuch he is the reſt of the Holy Spirit, Iſ. xi. 2. The Spirit came on the prophets, but he reſted on Jeſus as the beloved, Matth. iii. 16. All the ſaints as beloved ones have the Spirit in a meaſure; but he without meaſure as the Beloved, John iii. 34. The Spirit is in him as water in the fountain, to be communicated to others, Rev. iii. 1.

I ſhall conclude this point with a word of application.

Use I. Hereby ye may try whether ye be ſaints or not, partakers of the divine nature. If ſo, Chriſt will be your Beloved, your eminently beloved One; for ſo he is to the ſaints, and ſo he is to God. And if he is your Beloved,

1. Ye will love him above all, Pſal. lxxiii. 25. which will ſhew itſelf in deſiring him above all, prizing him beyond all, rejoicing moſt in his favour, and ſorrowing moſt for the want of him: and in loving other perſons and things for his ſake.

2. Ye

2. Ye will hate sin above all things, because it is most contrary to him, his nature and will, Gen iii. 15. Ye will hate it universally, constantly as to the habitual bent of your heart, and irreconcilably.

USE II. of reproof to those who love him not eminently, above all. It is an evidence, that,

1. Ye know him not, John iv. 10. None can be let into a discovery of Christ in his glory, but must love him, Matth. xiii. 44. 45. 46. It is to the blind world only, there is no beauty in him, for which he is to be desired.

2. That ye are in love with your sins and a vain world. For who would loath the Physician, but he that loves his disease, and cannot part with it?

USE III. Let him be your Beloved then, and give him your heart.

1. He is best worth your love. None has done so much for sinners as Christ has, dying for them. None can do so much for you; he can satisfy the cravings of your souls, and make you happy.

2. If ye love him not, ye will be constructed haters of him, and enemies to him, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, Maran-atha.*

DOCT. II. *The way how a sinner comes to be accepted of God, is freely, in Christ.*

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what is implied in it.

II. Consider the nature of a sinner's acceptance with God.

III. The way of it.

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to shew what is implied in the doctrine. And there are these things implied in it.

First, A state of non-acceptance, or unacceptableness with God, that sinners are in, while they are

not in Christ. And we may take up this in these following things.

1. They are offenders; they have sinned, and provoked him, Rom. iii. 23. Mens doing their duty, and mens misery, may make them unacceptable to men; yea one may be unacceptable to another, who cannot shew wherefore, only they cannot endure them. But nothing can make us unacceptable to God, but sin. So the unacceptable to God are undoubtedly sinners, offenders against him.

(1.) They are sinners in Adam, Rom. v. 12. The root was corrupted, and all the branches withered and rotted in him. So his guilt lies on us by nature, we are deprived of righteousness of nature, and instead of that we have derived a corrupt nature from him: all which makes us unacceptable to God by nature.

(2.) They are sinners in their own persons, who are capable of actual sinning, Gen. vi. 5. They imitate sinning Adam, as well as fall heirs to his offence. The debt left by him on their heads, they do not clear, but increase daily; they continue their rebellion, while condemned for it. And so they are more and more unacceptable.

2. They are unpardoned offenders. *All have sinned*, but some are pardoned and accepted: but none are pardoned who are out of Christ, John iii. *ult.* The sentence of the broken law stands in force against all those who are not in him, who has fulfilled the law. He is *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, Rom. x. 4. And,

(1.) Their original guilt lies on them, unremoved, unforgiven, 1 Cor. xv. 22. God has never forgiven them their guilt of Adam's first sin, their want of original righteousness, and the corruption of their whole nature. The debt left on them by their father, they were never either able or willing to pay: and though they may have forgot it, God has neither

ther forgiven nor forgot it, but it lies on them ſtill, to all effects and purpoſes of a dreadful purſuit for it.

(2.) The guilt of all their actual ſins lies on them, Gal. iii. 10. All the ſins they have been guilty of from the firſt ſproutings of corruption in their childhood to this day, are hard and faſt on them. None of all their ſins of omiſſion or commiſſion, of heart, lip, or life, are forgotten by God, Amos viii. 7. but the accounts are cloſely kept, Deut. xxxii. 34. Hoſ. xiii. 12. They may have made a faſhion of repenting, and begging pardon, for ſome of their groſſer ſins: but ſince they are not in Chriſt, there is not one of them blotted out; for *without ſhedding of blood is no remiſſion*, Heb. ix. 22. and there is no ſaving benefit of Chriſt's blood, but by being in him, chap xii. 24.

3. God is not pleaſed with them; for his being pleaſed with any of mankind is in his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and without him he can be pleaſed with none of them, Matth. iii. *ult.* Heb. xi. 5. 6. He is not pleaſed with their perſons, nor with any of their works; becauſe they themſelves are not in Chriſt; but yet in the old ſtock, Rom. viii. 8. and their works are not wrought in him, John xv. 5. So the apoſtle teacheth, that it was faith that made the difference between Abel's offering and Cain's, Heb. xi. 4.

4. He is highly diſpleaſed with them. There is a cloud of divine diſpleaſure ever upon them, John iii. *ult.* Whatever caſe they be in, rejoicing or weeping; whatever they be doing, ſerving God in their way, or ſerving their luſts; his countenance is never towards them, becauſe they are not in Chriſt, If. lxvi. 2. 3. There is a diſpleaſure conceived againſt them, on the juſteſt grounds, not to be removed till they be in Chriſt.

5. He cannot endure them to have any communion or intercourſe with them, farther than in the way of common providence, Pſal. v. 5. He and they are at enmity, he legally, they really: ſo there can be no

no communion, Amos iii. 3. And they cannot have it till they come to Chriſt, John xiv. 6. God may lay common favours to their hand, health, wealth, *&c.* as the condemned man is allowed his meat till the execution: but he grants them no ſpecial ſaving favours, no peace, pardon, *&c.* He may allow them to come, and call them into the outer court of ordinances, and make them offers of grace; but they cannot come into the inner court, nor partake of grace, not being in Chriſt, John x. 9.

6. He loaths them, his ſoul abhors them, as abominable. They are abominable in their perſons unto God, as wholly corrupt and defiled, Tit. i. 15. 16. The whole herd of them is ſo, Pſal. xiv. 3. Their works are abominable, even the beſt of them, like precious liquor in a filthy veſſel, Prov. xv. 8. Sin is the abominable thing unto God, Jer. xliv. 4. And all their ſins lie on them, and there is nothing on them to correct the abominable ſavour of the ſinner by them. Sin is abominable in believers too; but the ſacrifice of the ſweet-ſmelling ſavour of Chriſt corrects it, and is a ſavour of reſt, Gen. viii. 21.

7. *Laſtly*, The wrath of God is upon them, and they lie under his curſe, John iii. *ult.* Gal. iii. 10. They are *children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. There is much wrath on them, and they are liable to more. There is wrath in God's heart againſt them, in his word, and in his providential diſpenſations. And if the thread of their life be cut while they are in that ſtate of wrath, they are for ever undone without remedy.

Secondly, A way provided, how ſinners may be accepted. The caſe is not hopeleſs, but he that is not, may be accepted. The acceptance of ſome with God is now ſecured, and cannot be loſt. Believers on earth may fall under the frowns of a Father, but never out of the ſtate of acceptance with him; being *accepted in the Beloved.* The acceptance of the ſaints in glory is not liable to the leaſt cloud. The acceptance of ſome, again, is abſolutely hopeleſs. The

fallen

fallen angels never can, nor could have been accepted: the damned sometimes might, but can no more now for ever be accepted; they sat their accepted time. But there is a way how sinners in life may be accepted.

1. God is ready to accept of them now, that will come to him in his own way, 2 Cor. v. 19. The Judge of all the earth is set down on a throne of grace, for receiving of sinners into favour: and therefore we have now an *accepted time*, and *day of salvation*, chap. vi. 2.

2. There is ready for sinners what may procure them acceptance with a holy God, Matth. xxii. 4. There is a sacrifice slain and offered, that is of such a sweet-smelling savour, that the most loathsome sinner having the favour of it about him, cannot miss to be accepted.

3. There is open proclamation made in the gospel, that all may have the benefit of that sacrifice, and be accepted of God, 2 Cor. v 19. Matth. xxii. 4. Who they were whom the Father gave to the Son to be redeemed, is a secret: but the ransom is paid, the sacrifice is offered, for you to lay hold on and be accepted by. And that is the voice of the gospel.

Thirdly, The sinner's bestirring himself for acceptance with God. There is a way to acceptance, but the sinner must take that way, else he will not get acceptance. He cannot sit still careless, and be accepted: he must be where he is not yet, that is, in Christ; otherwise he can have no acceptance. The sinner's bestirring himself in this matter, takes in these three things.

1. A conviction of unacceptableness to God, John xvi. 8. Men must be convinced of their being unacceptable to God, ere they will come to Christ. It is their not seeing their own loathsomeness, that makes them slight the sacrifice of sweet savour; and think to be accepted of God, while yet they are not in Christ.

Chriſt. And for that cauſe it is needful they get a ſight of God's holineſs, and their own vileneſs.

2. A weighty concern and uneaſineſs about it. They muſt not go on to be eaſy, whether they be accepted of God or not. As long as a man can live contented without it, he will never be accepted. But the ſoul ſhall be brought to that, that all ſhall be ſapleſs without it.

3. Anxiety of heart for it, Acts ii. 37. There muſt be earneſt longings to be accepted of him, yea the ſoul muſt be brought to eſteem and ſo prize it, as to be content of it, upon any terms, Acts ix. 6. Not as if theſe were required to qualify us for acceptance with God; but that without them we will never come into Chriſt to be accepted in him.

II. The next general head is to conſider the nature of a ſinner's acceptance with God: and this I ſhall do, 1. In itſelf; and, 2. In its effects and conſequents.

First, I ſhall conſider the nature of a ſinner's acceptance with God in itſelf. And in itſelf it is a great and unſpeakable benefit, and implies theſe following things.

Firſt, In general, it implies an acceptance of the ſinner with God, as a righteous perſon. A righteous God cannot accept a ſon of Adam, but as righteous, that is, as being really righteous before him. And ſo a believer in Chriſt indeed is, and by faith pleading Chriſt's righteouſneſs for his righteouſneſs in the ſight of God, he is accepted accordingly. The Lord reputes, accounts, and accepts him into favour as a righteous perſon, 2 Cor. v. 21. Rom. iv. 6. & v. 19. So it ſtands in two things.

1. God's owning and ſuſtaining a righteouſneſs upon the believer, as anſwering the demands of the law fully, Rom. iii. 22. and holding him a righteous perſon thereupon. The ſinner ſtanding before him in the Beloved, pleading the Mediator's righteouſneſs, the plea is ſuſtained, and God ſaith, *Deliver him from*

from going down to the pit, I have found a ranſom, Job xxxiii. 24. The law gives in its demands againſt him, of holineſs of nature, righteouſneſs of life, and ſatisfaction for ſin. And it is found that all theſe demands are ſatisfied, and that the righteouſneſs upon him fully anſwers them all, that the law has no more to crave. And ſo in the very eye of the law, he is through grace held righteous.

2. On the account of that righteouſneſs, he is accepted into favour with God, Rom. iii. 24. 25. It was the ſinner's unrighteouſneſs that caſt him out of God's favour, and held him out of it. Now that bar is taken away, and the righteouſneſs upon him procures the favour of a righteous God, who loveth righteouſneſs. God is perfectly pleaſed with that righteouſneſs, as much as ever he was diſpleaſed with the party's ſin: and he is ſo well pleaſed with it, that notwithſtanding of all the ſins the party ever committed, he accepts him into favour for its ſake.

Secondly, More particularly, it implies,

1. The ceaſing of wrath againſt the ſoul, Hoſ. xiv. 4. The wrath of God no more abides on the accepted perſon; that cloud clears. And it clears ſo, that that ſhower ſhall never come on again, nor one drop of it, of revenging wrath, for ever and ever, Iſ. liv. 9. The ſmall rain of fatherly anger may come on him for his after-miſcarriages; but the great rain of his revenging wrath ſhall never return, Cant. ii. 10. 11.

2. The curſe is removed, Gal. iii. 13. That is the ſentence of the broken law, that lay on the ſinner binding him over to revenging wrath: which ſeized all mankind in Adam, and which is fortified daily by actual ſin, while the ſinner is out of Chriſt. But being accepted in Chriſt, that is taken away, Rom. viii. 1. The ſentence is reverſed, ver. 33. 34. the curſed ſinner is looſed from that dreadful ſtake, to which he was tied as the mark for the arrows of God.

3. He is fully pardoned, Iſ. xliii. 25. The accepted

cepted ſinner gets the King of heaven's pardon, under his great ſeal; whereby his guilt of eternal wrath is for ever removed, as if he had never ſinned. God takes the pen, dips it in the blood of the Beloved, and blots out his whole accounts. All his paſt and preſent ſins are formally pardoned, and all his ſins to come are ſecured not to be imputed to him, for guilt of revenging wrath, Rom. iv. 6. 7. 8.

4. He is reconciled to God, Rom. v. 1. The Lord lays down the legal enmity he bore againſt that perſon, never to take it up again: and he gives him peace through the Beloved, Eph. ii. 14. So that though all the world ſhould be at red war with him, he has a firm peace with heaven, that he needs fear no hoſtilities from that quarter again for ever: which is enough to ſettle the heart amidſt all troubles, Phil. iv. 7.

5. God is pleaſed with him, Heb xi. 5. Still they are ſinners indeed, and God can never be pleaſed with their ſins; but their ſins hinder not that he be pleaſed with their perſons in Chriſt. The prodigal ſon returns to his father in rags, poverty, and want, with not a ſhoe on his foot: the father is not pleaſed with the rags on his ſon, but natural affection embraces him notwithſtanding of his rags, he being his own ſon. So God embraces the ſinner in the Beloved, becauſe he is in him.

6. He is highly pleaſed with him, Iſ. xlii. 21. He is as much pleaſed with the believer's perſon, as ever he was diſpleaſed with him. He is pleaſed with him, as one is with his jewels, Mal. iii. 17. as if he ſaw no ſin in them, Numb. xxiii. 21. as if there were no ſpot on them, Cant. iv. 7. In a word, he is infinitely pleaſed with them, and can never ceaſe to be ſo. For the only ground of his being pleaſed with them, is the Beloved in whom they are, his righteouſneſs which is upon them: and he is infinitely pleaſed with the Beloved and his righteouſneſs, and they are not liable to any alteration, John xvii. 21. Indeed, if their acceptance

acceptance depended on what is wrought by them, or in them, it could not be so: but it is not set on such a slippery foundation. He is displeased with their sins, and they may smart for them: but the pleasedness with their persons in Christ is not alterable, Col. ii. 10.

7. He admits them into communion with him, 1 John i. 3. The person is let into the inner court, into the chambers of the King, Cant. i. 4. The Lord treats him as a friend, and not as a mere servant, John xv. 15. They are now agreed, and so walk together: and not only agreed, but received into special favour; and are made God's favourites, courtiers of Heaven in the Beloved, in the court kept below, Is. lvii. 15. He dwells and walks in them, 2 Cor. vi. 16. and they dwell in him, 1 John iv. 15. Psal. xc. 1.

8. *Lastly*, God hath a delight and complacency in them, Is. lxii. 4. He looks on them in his own Son, and takes pleasure in them, as covered with his righteousness. As Isaac smelling the smell of the elder brother's garments on Jacob; so believers are to God a sweet savour of Christ, 2 Cor ii. 15. and therefore he delights in them, whom before he loathed.

SECONDLY, Let us consider this acceptance in its effects and consequents. It is in these an unspeakable privilege. By means of it,

1. The springs of mercy are opened to the sinner, that rivers of compassion may flow towards him, Rom. v. 1. *&c.* Many look for mercy while unaccepted: but the unsatisfied law will draw a bar betwixt all saving mercy and them. But the believer being accepted, the law's mouth is stopt, and mercy may flow freely.

2. He is adjudged to eternal life, 2 Thess. i. 6. 7. Acts xxvi. 18. Life was promised in the first covenant, upon the fulfilling of the law: now the believer being accepted of God as a righteous person, for

whom the law is fulfilled, is accordingly adjudged to live for ever.

3. The channel of ſanctification is cleared for him, and the dominion of ſin is broken in him, Rom. vi. 14. While the ſinner is unaccepted, and under the curſe, communion with God is ſtopt, and death preys on his ſoul: for *the ſting of death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law*, 1 Cor. xv. 56. As long as the law has a curſing and condemning power over a man, ſin reigns in him, like briers and thorns in the curſed ground: but theſe being removed, ſin loſeth its ſtrength, and the bleſſing coming in their room makes him fruitful. So faith ſanctifies.

4. He is privileged with peace of conſcience. Peace with God makes peace within one's breaſt, Phil. iv. 7. While one is unaccepted of God, guilt lies on the conſcience, which makes a foul and condemning one, that will gnaw like a worm, and blaſt all outward peace and proſperity: but being accepted, the conſcience is cleanſed, Heb. ix. 14. and turns a good conſcience, that will make one rejoice in trouble, 2 Cor. i. 12.

5. Acceſs to God with confidence, Eph. iii. 12. 1 John iii. 21. God allows them whom he accepts, acceſs to him in duties, that they may come to him, as children to a father, with all their wants, complaints, *&c.* expecting all from him that is really good for them, Job xxxiii. 24. 26. They are privileged with the hearing of their prayers, communion with him in word and providences, receiving, by the means of grace, light in darkneſs, ſtrength in weakneſs, health in ſickneſs, *&c.*

6. Acceptance of their works, Prov. xv. 8. God accepting a man's perſon in Chriſt, does next accept his work, Gen. iv. 4. If it were never ſuch a ſmall work, a cup of cold water given one in name of a diſciple, though attended with many imperfections, yet being fruit that grows on a branch ingrafted in-

to

to Chriſt, it is accepted of God, as ſavouring of the ſtock.

7. The unſtinging of afflictions and death, 1 Cor. xv. 55. It alters the very nature of theſe; afflictions are no more properly penal, but correctory and medicinal, Iſ. xxvii. 9. and death perfects the cure. A bee-ſting they may have, but the ſerpentine deadly ſting is gone: for the curſe is removed out of their croſſes, and they are bleſſings.

8. *Laſtly*, All things working for good, Rom. viii. 28. In a ſtate of non acceptance, all things work for evil to a man: his proſperity deſtroys him; the very goſpel is a ſavour of death unto him, that he draws death out of what others get life. But being accepted, the worſt of things tend to his profit, God being for him, nothing can be eventually againſt him; but whether the wind blow on his back or face, it drives him to the harbour.

III. I proceed to ſhew the way of a ſinner's acceptance with God.

Firſt, It is *freely*. There is nothing in the ſinner himſelf to procure it, or move God to it, Rom. iii. 24. but as the ſun ſhines without hire on the dunghill, ſo God accepts ſinners of mere grace. It is done freely, in that,

1. It is without reſpect to any work done by the ſinner, Tit. iii. 5. Grace and works are inconſiſtent in this matter. Men may render themſelves acceptable to men, by ſome work of theirs, that is profitable or pleaſant to them: but no work of ours can render us acceptable to God. It is natural for men to think to gain acceptance with God, by their doing better: and when they have ſet themſelves to do and work for that end, they pleaſe themſelves that they are accepted. But miſtake it not, that way of acceptance is blocked up. For,

(1.) All works of ours are excluded from our juſtification, whereof our acceptance is a part, Rom.

iii 20. and faith and works are oppoſed in that matter, ver. 28. Gal. ii. 16.

(2.) Our beſt works are attended with ſinful imperfections, Iſ. lxiv. 6. and mixed with many evil works, Jam. iii. 2. So in them there is ground for God's loathing and condemning us; how then can we be accepted for what is in itſelf loathſome and condemnable?

(3.) We can do no good works before we be accepted, John ix. 31. Heb. xi. 6. The tree muſt be good, ere the fruit can be ſo. The perſon out of Chriſt can work no works, but dead works, John xv. 5. for he is, while ſo, in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity. And what is all that the man can do before he believe and be accepted in Chriſt, but a parcel of hypocritical works?

2. It is without reſpect to any good qualification or diſpoſition wrought in the ſinner, Rom. iv. 5. *To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that juſtifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteouſneſs.* Men may be accepted of men, if though they have done nothing, they yet are well qualified for doing, or are agreeable in their diſpoſition: but that is not the way of a ſinner's acceptance with God, though the bias of our nature lies that way to expect it. For,

(1.) The way of a ſinner's acceptance with God excludes all boaſting, Rom. iii. 27. And it is the deſign of the goſpel to exclude it: but if there were a reſpect to any good qualities in the party accepted, there would be ſome ground for boaſting.

(2.) What good qualities can there be in the ſinner before he be accepted in Chriſt? Heb. xi. 6. It is true he may be touched with a ſenſe of his ſin, may be filled with ſorrow and remorſe for it, and deſiring to be delivered: but all theſe are but legal and ſelfiſh diſpoſitions, whereof not God, but ſelf is the end. It is by union with him that gracious qualities muſt be wrought in the ſoul, Acts xxvi. 18.

(3.) When the man comes to be endued with gracious

cious qualities, as he is by that time already accepted, so if his acceptance depended on them, he would miss of it; for still they are imperfect, having a great mixture of the contrary ill qualities, that need to be covered another way. And how can one expect acceptance on that, for which he needs a pardon?

Secondly, It is *in Christ* the sinner is accepted. It implies,

1. The cause of a sinner's acceptance with God. It is for Christ's sake, Rom. iii. 24. 25. *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.* & v. 19.—*By the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.* He is the Beloved of the Father, so highly acceptable to him, that sinners are accepted for his sake, Matth. iii. *ult.* The acceptance of the Mediator is so full, that like the oil on Aaron's head, it runs down to the skirts of his garments. He is the Mediator, that brings in the sinner to the throne of grace, mediates his peace, and procures his acceptance into favour with God. This is,

(1.) The sole cause of the sinner's acceptance with God, Rom. iii. 24. As in purchasing of the sinner's acceptance, so in procuring it, he alone is the actor. No righteousness is mixed with his, no works with his works. God has an eye to none but him, and nothing but him, in accepting the sinner. Some are better than others indeed, before they are accepted: but both are absolutely free grace's debtors for acceptance.

(2.) The full cause, fully proportioned in its efficacy to the acceptance of the worst sinners, Heb. vii. 25. As there is nothing else that can procure our acceptance, so we need nothing else for that end. Corrupt nature reckons it is too great a venture, to lay our acceptance with God on Christ's righteousness alone; and therefore, to make sure work, re-

quires such and such works to be done, and such and such good qualities the sinner is to be adorned with. But what needs wood, hay, and stubble, to be laid in with the Rock for a foundation?

2. The state of acceptableness of a sinner, wherein he may, and will be, and cannot but be accepted of God; it is being in Christ, united to him by faith. One must not think to be accepted for Christ's sake, while out of Christ: no more than the branch of one tree can partake of the sap of another, while not ingrafted into it; or the slayer could be safe, while he was not yet got within the gates of the city of refuge. For,

(1.) Where there is no union with Christ, there can be no communion with him, John xv. 6. *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.* Can a branch be nourished by the juice of a stock with which it is not knit? Neither can a man be accepted for the sake of Christ's righteousness, while he is not united to him. As it is the marriage with the woman that makes her portion the man's; so it is a spiritual marriage-union with Christ by faith that makes his righteousness actually ours, so as to be accepted for it.

(2.) Christ's salvation is in the event confined to his body, though in the offer it is extended to all. He is the Saviour of the world indeed, John iv. 42. But does he save all the world? No; thousands perish for all that, because they do not unite with him, are not in him. He is the Saviour of the body, Eph. v. 23. His body he actually saves, every member thereof, and none else. He is the Saviour of the world officially, of his body only eventually. An ark there was provided before the universal deluge, but none were saved that were not in it.

(3.) The Father's good pleasure with mankind-sinners goes not without him, Matth. iii. *ult.* As without the verge of the city of refuge the slayer could expect no protection; so without Christ there is nothing

thing but the curſe, wrath, and death. God cannot accept us as righteous, while he ſees no righteouſneſs on us: there can be no righteouſneſs on us before God, but as we are in Chriſt, ſhaded with his righteouſneſs, 2 Cor. v. 21. Therefore he cannot be pleaſed with a ſinner out of Chriſt.

(4.) *Laſtly*, The covenant of peace reaches not without him, Iſ. xlix. 8. and there is no acceptance of a ſinner but in it. He was the only party-contractor in it, and contracted only for his ſeed; and it is only by faith uniting with Chriſt that we are actually in it. Know then that the whole of your ſalvation lies here. Ye muſt be in Chriſt, or ye can have no ſaving benefit by him. For God will not accept you even for Chriſt's ſake, if ye be not *in* him.

But in Chriſt the ſinner is in a ſtate of acceptableneſs to God. We take up this in theſe five things following.

1. In Chriſt the ſinner may be accepted of God, 2 Cor. v. 19. *God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto them.* There God may, with ſafety of his honour, meet with the ſinner, and receive him into favour. While the ſinner is out of Chriſt, it is inconſiſtent with the honour of God to accept of him: where is the honour of his juſtice and holineſs, and of his law, if that ſhould be? But the ſinner being in Chriſt, theſe bars are removed, Matth. xxii. 4.

Reaſon. Chriſt has fully ſatisfied the law, in the name and ſtead of all his, Rom. x. 4. The law can demand nothing of them, but what it has got of their Surety for them: ſo juſtice cannot hinder their acceptance. And it has got,

(1.) Holineſs of nature. It is true, it is not in them in their own perſons, in the eye of the law: but in Chriſt as a public perſon it is; for he was born perfectly holy, brought a holy ſpotleſs human nature into the world with him, which was never in the leaſt ſtained, Luke i. 35. Heb. vii. 26.

(2.) Righteouſneſs

(2.) Righteouſneſs of life. They cannot pretend to it in their own perſons: but Chriſt has furniſhed it for them, Phil. ii. 8. *He humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death.* All the ten commands had their due from him. His obedience was univerſal, conſtant without interruption, voluntary without conſtraint, and perfect without the leaſt failure in degree or meaſure.

(3.) Satisfaction for ſin. That is quite beyond their reach: but he has ſatisfied fully, Gal. iii. 13. *Chriſt hath redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us.* Death in all its ſhapes preyed on him. The forerunners of it met him, at his entrance into the world: it hung about him all his days: in end it came on him with all its joint forces, carried him to the duſt of death, kept him in the priſon of the grave, till the debt was declared to be completely paid.

2. In Chriſt the ſinner will be accepted. Any, even the worſt of ſinners ſhall certainly be accepted in Chriſt, Acts xvi. 31. *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved.* Whoſoever ſhall make their eſcape into this city of refuge ſhall be ſafe. Chriſt will refuſe none that come to him: and God will reject none that are in Chriſt. Let this be ſecured, and all is ſafe.

Reaſ. The promiſe of the goſpel enſures this. The truth of Heaven is plighted for it, that ſinners may have all encouragement to come to Chriſt, John iii. 16. *For God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* It is an unalterable ſtatute, that *he that believeth ſhall be ſaved*, Mark xvi. 16. The word is full of promiſes of this nature. See Iſ. lv. 1. 2. So that as Chriſt's ſatisfaction ſhews it is in the power of a holy God, to accept ſinners; the promiſe of the goſpel aſcertains it to be his will.

3. In Chriſt the ſinner cannot but be accepted. It is impoſſible it ſhould fail or miſcarry, Heb. vi. 18.

That

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Heaven and earth may pass away sooner, than a sinner in Christ should not be accepted into favour with God.

Reas. There is a right of a third party in this matter, which it is impossible to be balked. It is not only God and the sinner that are here concerned, but the Mediator Christ appears for his interest. In the covenant that passed from eternity betwixt him and the Father, it was promised him, that on condition of his fulfilling all his righteousness, sinners should be accepted in him: he has fulfilled the condition, and so demands it as his own right, to whom the promises were made, Tit. i. 2.

4. That moment a sinner is in Christ, he is accepted, Rom. viii. 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* No sooner does the soul come into Christ by faith, but all is safe: the man is in a state of favour with God, the day is risen with him, and the long and black night of the state of wrath is at an end. For then,

(1.) Heaven's offer is accepted as it was made. In the gospel there is an offer of Christ and his righteousness made to the sinner, Rom. i. 17. and of acceptance in him, Acts xiii. 38. The soul by faith coming to Christ, accepts the offer: so the acceptance with God offered, becomes actually his.

(2.) Faith uniting the soul to Christ, upon that union with him follows a communion with him in his righteousness, yea in his fulness; as in marriage there is a communion of goods, 1 John i. 3. So the soul wants nothing to commend it to God for acceptance, having all in its head Christ, 1 Cor. i. 30. Col. ii. 10. The holiness and purity of his birth is theirs; all the good works he did during his life are theirs; and all that he suffered in life and death is theirs. All fulness being united to all emptiness, the

empty

empty creature is filled, and rendered accepted: the tranſcendent beauty of the Head caſts a luſtre on all the members.

(3.) The ſoul pleading Chriſt's righteouſneſs, and Chriſt interceding for the ſoul on that ground, the imputation of it, and acceptance of the perſon upon it, muſt immediately enſue. Faith's plea is well bottomed, and cannot be refuſed: Chriſt's interceſſion is always effectual: ſo the righteouſneſs that is theirs by faith, cannot miſs to be reckoned theirs, and they accepted as righteous thereon, 2 Cor. v. 21.

5. *Laſtly*, While they abide in Chriſt, they remain accepted: ſo their union with him being everlaſting, the acceptance of their perſons can never be interrupted, John x. 28. *I give unto them eternal life, and they ſhall never periſh, neither ſhall any pluck them out of my hand.* Rom. viii. 1. It continues in their adverſity, as well as proſperity, Job xlii. 8. Their ſins may bring them under heavy ſtrokes, yet ſtill their perſons are accepted in Chriſt, Pſal. lxxxix. 30.—34. It continues in death, as well as in life, John xi. 11. and will continue through eternity, Heb. vii. 25. for that righteouſneſs of Chriſt put on by faith will ever continue on them: their union with Chriſt can never be diſſolved; and being in Chriſt, they can never be but accepted.

I come now to the improvement of this ſubject.

1. Then the door of acceptance with God is open to all: none are excluded, Iſ. lv. 1. 2. What is given freely, one has acceſs to, as well as another, whatever they have been. Not that God will accept of any, who will continue in their ſin, and will not come to Chriſt; but that none ſhall be refuſed, who will come for acceptance in the method God has laid down.

2. Seek then acceptance with God, that ye may find favour with him. This ſhould be your main aim, 2 Cor. v. 9. Here your happineſs lies in time and

and eternity, Pſal. xxx. 5. *In his favour is life.* The favour of the world is both inſufficient and uncertain: it cannot ſatisfy in life, much leſs in death. God is the beſt friend, and the moſt terrible enemy: for he is an everlaſting friend, and an everlaſting enemy too.

3. Seek it freely, without pretending to any thing in yourſelves to recommend you to his acceptance or favour. Put no confidence in whole or in part, in your doings, ſufferings, attainments, Phil. iii. 7. 8. otherwiſe ye do put a bar in your own way, and will meet with that, *Thy money periſh with thyſelf.* Mind that this may procure your rejection, and therefore not your acceptance.

4. Seek it through Jeſus Chriſt only, that is, by faith in him, laying the whole ſtreſs of your acceptance on his righteouſneſs. The Jews miſſed it, becauſe they ſought it not this way, Rom. ix. 32. No perſon nor thing elſe can procure you the favour of God; no righteouſneſs elſe will cover you: nothing but the blood of the Redeemer can be a covert from revenging juſtice; nor will any thing elſe purge the conſcience. All other things will be but as a wall of dry boards betwixt you and the conſuming fire.

5. *Laſtly*, Therefore as ever ye would have acceptance or favour with God, ſeek to be in Chriſt; to be united to him. For as there is no acceptance with God, but for his ſake; ſo there is no acceptance for his ſake, but to thoſe that are in him, Col. i. 27. There is ſalvation in Chriſt, but none partake of it that are not in him; a righteouſneſs in him, but it covers none, but the members of his body. And,

(1.) This is the only way to be ſafe in time: for it is the only way to be without the verge of wrath, John iii. *ult.* And they that are without it are ſafe, go times as they will, John xvi *ult.* While the Lord is threatening a rouſing ſtroke on the generation, the only ſafety will be in Chriſt, Micah v. 5. If. viii. 14. & xxvi. 20.

(2.) It is the only way to be ſafe in eternity, Phil. iii.

iii. 9. We must launch out of time into eternity, and there is no escaping the gulf of eternal wrath, but in him. They that are not in him, must depart from him; and departing from him, they must go into everlasting fire.

Quest. How may we then get into Christ?

Answ. 1. The only way to get into him is by faith, Eph. iii. 17. And faith is the convinced soul's renouncing all confidence in itself, and trusting on him entirely for salvation from sin and wrath, upon the ground of the faithfulness of God in the promise of the gospel. Hereby the soul knits with Christ, hangs on him, depends on him, wholly to stand or fall, according as he shall deal with them.

2. The only way to get that faith, is by his Spirit in us, 2 Cor. iv. 13. Christ communicating his quickening Spirit unto the dead soul, it believes: and believing is united to Christ, and accepted in him. Wherefore breathe, pant, and long for the Spirit of Christ, Luke xi. 13.

I shall now drop a word very briefly to the last doctrine, and so conclude this subject.

DOCT. III. *ult. Glorious free grace shines forth in the acceptance of sinners in the beloved Jesus.*

We shall consider, wherein it shines there. It shines,

1. In his admitting a Surety to mediate for the acceptance of sinners, when he might have insisted that the soul that sinned should die, Rom. v. 8. *God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* The necks of all the elect were on the block, and it was in the hand of spotless justice to reach them the fatal stroke. But glorious free grace admits a surety in their room.

2. He provided the Surety, John iii. 16. as he did the ram to come instead of Isaac lying bound on the altar. All the beasts of the field could not have afforded

afforded a ſacrifice ſufficient for the ſinner's acceptance; nor the angels in heaven a cautioner: but glorious grace gave God's own Son, Pſal. lxxxix. 19. *I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one choſen out of the people.* So the righteouſneſs is the righteouſneſs of God, not only of one who is God, but provided by God.

3. He demands nothing of us, to render us acceptable in whole or in part; but the cauſe of his accepting ſinners is wholly without them, Rom. iii. 24. *Being juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt.* To us it is in no wiſe, Give and get; but, Take and have, Rom. iv. 16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promiſe might be ſure to all the ſeed.* So nothing in us has any hand in it, but faith, as the hand whereby it is received.

4. The very hand of faith, whereby it is received, is God's free gift, Eph. ii. 8. *For by grace are ye ſaved, through faith; and that not of yourſelves: it is the gift of God.* Phil. i. 29. That one believes while another doth not, is owing purely to free grace, which makes the difference; giving the quickening Spirit to one, that is not communicated to another.

5. In its breaking over all impediments lying in its way, ſuch as theſe in the caſe of the Corinthians, to whom the apoſtle ſays, *Know ye not that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God. And ſuch were ſome of you: but ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified in the name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of our God,* 1 Cor. vi. 9. 10. 11. In the beſt of ſinners, there is that loathſomeneſs and unworthineſs found, that proclaims a glory of grace in their acceptance, Jer. iii. 19. *I ſaid, How ſhall I put thee among the*

children? But in the worst of them there is nothing found but what glorious grace will break over, to accept them in Christ, as in Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, Paul, *&c.*

6. In the thoroughness of the acceptance, Is. i. 18. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wooll.* Acceptance among men is often coldrife, and by halves, so as the heart is not freely toward the pardoned offender. But God's acceptance of sinners in Christ, is perfect the first moment; they are perfectly beloved in him, John xvii. 21.

7. *Lastly*, In the perpetuity and constancy of it; sinners are so accepted in Christ, that they shall never be cast out of God's favour again, John x. 28. 29. *And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.* They are not put on their good behaviour, as to the acceptance of their persons with God, but it is secured unalterably in Christ. The smiles and frowns of a Father, will indeed be as they carry.

Use. 1. Let us loath Popery then, as the smoke of the bottomless pit darkening the glory of grace in the acceptance of sinners, by their merit of works, and other corrupt doctrines and practices, laying another foundation than Christ. It is evident, we are in danger of it; and it will be our wisdom, to be on our guard, that we be not catched napping, come what will.

2. Let all be encouraged to come to God through Christ for acceptance, assuring themselves they may have it through him, God being well pleased with him, and with every one who believes in him for life, pardon and acceptance.

FINIS.